

DEADWOOD DICK'S REMARKABLE ROLE!



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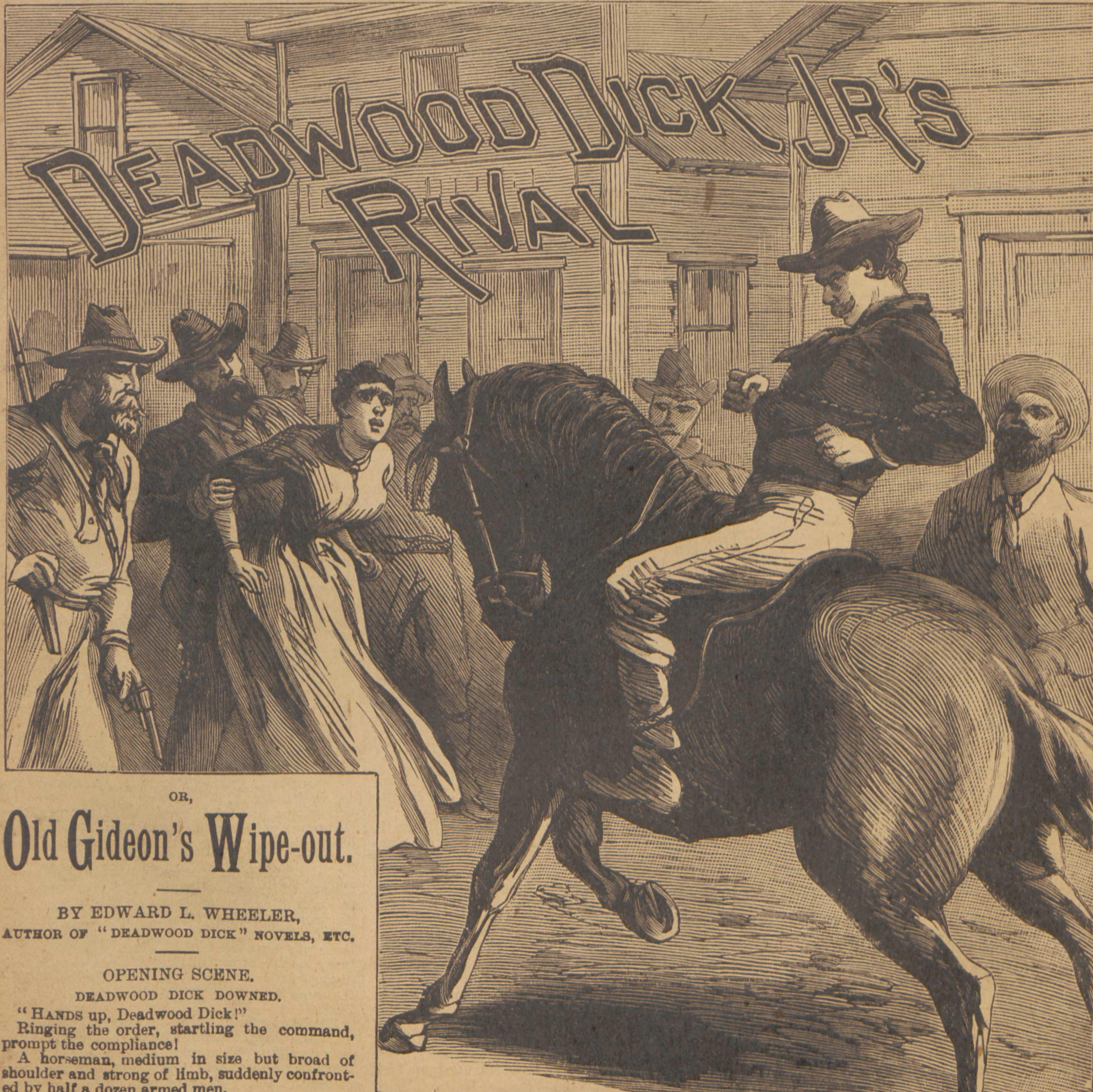
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## OR, Old Gideon's Wipe-out.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,  
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

### OPENING SCENE.

DEADWOOD DICK DOWNED.

"HANDS up, Deadwood Dick!"  
Ringing the order, startling the command,  
prompt the compliance!

A horseman, medium in size but broad of  
shoulder and strong of limb, suddenly confront-  
ed by half a dozen armed men.

The rider was a young man, seemingly not  
over thirty years of age, with dark hair and

DICK NOW TUGGED AT HIS BONDS TILL THE VEINS STOOD OUT UPON HIS FACE LIKE  
RIDGES RAISED BY THE BLOWS OF A WHIP.

mustache and keen, piercing, magnetic black eyes; and having brought his horse to a stop he coolly asked:

"Well, what's wanted?"

"You ar' wanted, Deadwood Dick, that's what's wanted," he was promptly told. "You have come to ther end of yer rope now—or anyhow ye will be at the end of et in less 'n an hour—the noose end."

The lone horseman smiled, spite of his dangerous situation.

"You have made a mistake this time, gentlemen," he declared. "My name is not Deadwood Dick."

"Bah! go tell that ar' to the buzzards, won't yer? Don't ye s'pose we know ye well enough? I hev seen ye before, me lad, and we've been lookin' fer ye hyer. We hev got ye now."

"But," and the horseman spoke seriously, "I tell you I am not he. For once in your life, my man, you have made a mistake."

"That don't go down. You can't git off wi' that kind o' yarn."

"It is the truth."

"An' I tell ye I know better. I haven't gone cross-eyed sence I seen ye last time, an' I guess I'd orter know ye. Dusky Dick is waitin' fur ye, and thar will be a choker party when we take ye in. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Dusky Dick, the Dark Dread? You would not give me into *his* hands? By all that you hold dear I entreat you to let me go, and I will reward you greatly. I will take you with me and give you *double* what you can hope to gain by serving this devil in human guise."

"Ha! ha! ha! Show ther white feather, do ye? I thort ye would, ef ever we got our claws on ye. Nary a let go fer you, Deadwood Dick, till we let ye go at ther end of a rope. Ther captain has been expectin' you, sooner or later, and has been ready and waitin' to receive ye. Keep yerself quiet, now, or you'll have ter be taken to him dead."

The leader of the half-dozen had given a signal, and his companions had flung themselves upon the horseman and were binding him hands and feet.

"But I tell you this is a mistake!" the prisoner protested, struggling to free himself. "I am not Deadwood Dick! Free me, and give me a chance to prove who and what I am!"

"Nary a free, me noble Richard. We'll hang ye first, and then try yer case after that, and ef we find ye innocent we'll draw up reserlusions of regret, or somethin' of that sort. Bring him on, pards, and we'll hand him over to ther captain fer him ter deal with."

Their work accomplished, they moved forward, one of their number running on ahead as though to carry the good news in advance.

Deadwood Dick, if it was he, was in a desperate strait.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### GIDEON'S BAND.

"WHOAP, thar, pilgrims!"

"Whoa! Whoa! Wull, what's ther matter?"

"Nothin's ther matter, but we want ter know who ye be, what ye ar', and whar ye ar' goin'."

"By what right do ye make them 'ar demands?"

"We make 'em by ther right of might. We have got ther lift on ye, so ye had better come to time and onwind. Thar's a lump o' lead 'hind every trigger, and we mean biz."

In the depths of a rugged mountain pass.

A little band of horsemen and plodders on foot brought suddenly to a stop at a bend in the trail.

Before them five or six rough-looking fellows wearing half-masks, each with a revolver presented, blocking the way—for the time being holding the advantage of the situation.

The leader of the emigrants, a man of grizzled hair and beard, apparently past the prime of life, aged beyond his years by hard knocks and rough buffeting against the world, as one might guess; his keen eyes, however, yet undimmed, and his manner fearless.

"Wull, strangers," this man said in a blunt way, "you seem ter have ther best of et just now, but ye'll find that we don't scar' worth a cent. My name is Gideon G. Grips, and these hyer with me ar' my people—Gideon's band ez et wur. We ar' honest folks, as folks go, and we're headin' fer a new diggin's we've heard tell of—Bank Garden."

"Jest what we thought, that you was bound fer Bank Garden, and we're hyer to give ye notice to turn right about and go back ther way ye hev come."

"By what right do ye do that?"

"Right of might, same as before, pilgrins. We own this Bank Garden ye have heard about, and we've got all ther folks thar we want. So, don't stand on ther order, but turn tail to and git."

"You'll find that Gideon and his band ain't that sort, pardner. We hev set out fer Bank Garden, and thar's whar we ar' goin', if we have ter fight our way thar. I guess that ar is plain enough fer you to understand, ain't et? Ef et ain't, don't know how ter make et plainer."

"Then you refuse to turn back?"

"Most 'suredly."

Then fell a moment of silence.

"By ther way," the spokesman of the opposing party next asked, "what is et takes ye to that 'ar camp?"

"Ther desire fer gold an' gain," was the prompt answer. "We hev heard tell it's ter be had thar, and we ar' bound ter have a share of et if we can. That's ther long and short of et."

"But, have you heard of Dusty Dick?"

"Not to ther best of my b'lief and knowl edge."

"Wull, he's boss of ther camp, and he has made a decree, as he calls et, that no more citzens will be 'lowed ter come in an' share."

"Guess he didn't reckon on Gideon's band when he made that 'ar decree, did he?"

"He made ther decree all ther same, though, pilgrims, and we ar' hyer to aid in carryin' out his laws. Thar's only two trails leads to that camp, and this hyer is one of 'em. Both of 'em ar' guarded, and ther chances of your gettin' through is ruther lean."

"But, we ar' goin' through all ther same."

"We don't see how ye ar' goin' ter manage et. We have got ther lift on ye bad, so what ar' ye goin' ter do about et?"

"Wull, I'm disposed ter argy ther p'ints with ye, first, and ef that don't do, then we'll try some other how. You kin make up your mind to et that Gideon G. Grips and his famby ar' goin' ter Bank Garden or bu'st."

"Then et's likely ter be a bu'st. Dusty Dick, our chief, has made his orders plain, and we ar' bound ter turn ye back, even ef we have ter shed blood ter do et, so what's ther usa kickin'? This camp of Bank Garden is private property, and Dusty Dick is the owner."

"Hold on, thare, boys! Don't begin to kill!"

The call came from a little further around the bend than where the half-dozen of guardsmen stood.

With one accord every man of them turned his head to look in the direction of the voice, seeing the emigrants look suddenly that way, and immediately a mocking laugh was heard.

"Ha! ha! ha! No, don't begin to kill, boys, but up with your hands, every man of you!"

That loud laugh, and the louder command, came from the same place whence had come the other words, and in the alarm the guardsman looked back again toward the little company.

In that brief moment the situation had been changed wholly!

There was the leader of Gideon's band, with a big revolver aimed straight at the head of the guard spokesman, and every one of the band presented either an old gun or revolver, covering all the Dusty Dick gang.

"Do ye see ther p'nt?" demanded Gideon. "This is ther p'nt of my argymint. Lift yer hands, or by ther day o' doom ef I don't lift yer roof so quick ye won't ever know what hit ye! Up with 'em! or thar will be 'wailin' in yer wigwam fer ther brave that never kem back."

The tables had been turned, and the hands of the masked men were raised, with their weapons still gripped in them.

No sooner that done, than three or four of Gideon's band stepped forward and disarmed them.

And, not only so, but proceeded forthwith to bind them as well.

"Ye thort ter git ther bulge on old Gideon G. Grips, did yer?" the leader of the little company scolded, while this was being done. "Guess ye have woked up to ther fact that Gideon and his band ain't ter be ketched nappin'. We'll take ye in to this hyer Dusty Dicky, or whatever et is ye call him, and see what he thinks of ye. Et will be our card of interdiction."

"Et will be yer check to ther other shore, that's what et will be," stormed the chagrined leader of the guardsmen.

"All right, ef so; we'll have company, you bet! But, I reckon et won't work that way, fer Gideon and his band ar' hard nuts, every one of us, and we kin hold our own in a scrimmage, every time. Ain't that so, Elviry?"

He turned suddenly and appealed to one of his party.

That one was a woman, a most homely old

bag, whose mouth was cavernous in its dimensions when she opened it to reply.

"Wull, you kin jest bet your terbacky on that, Gideon!" she cried, in a high and cracked voice. "We are a faintly what don't know what et means ter be downed, and I'm ther mother of ther null of et. By ther great—"

"D'yé hear?" interrupted Gideon, turning to his prisoners again. "D'yé hear what ther old dame has ter say? That's ther kind of spring chickens we ar', and mebby this hyer Dusty Dick of yours won't 'bject ter takin' us inter his roost when he comes ter size us up."

The prisoners had by this time been made secure.

Putting them ahead of his company, two by two, Mr. Grips ordered them forward, and they all went along down the gulch.

We have bad time to take note of this "Gideon's Band," as its head has given us name for the party, and a word just here concerning other members of it will not be out of place.

There were ten persons besides the leader.

One of these has been mentioned and described; the others were well worthy, in appearance, to be called her children.

There was another woman, one whose age could hardly be guessed, since she might be anything from twenty-five to forty-five. She was rather slatternly attired, and her face and hands were not remarkable for cleanliness.

Then there were six men, some of whom were hard-looking characters, and two youths. In brief, the old leader himself was about the most reputable-looking one of the bunch, but he did not improve upon extended acquaintance. He, the two women, and one man besides, were the only ones mounted.

Little was said as they moved along, and finally they came out in a broad pocket, where before them was seen the place of their destination.

It was, at a glance, a camp of about the usual type, but as they drew nearer a difference could be noted.

There was wanted the activity which genuine trade and competition inspire.

As they drew yet nearer still, a crowd poured out into the one main street of the place, and then a shout went up.

The citizens—denizens, or whatever you will—had discovered the plight of their fellows, and great was the excitement their discovery created. Who and what were these strangers?

#### CHAPTER II.

##### PROVING THEIR CLAIM.

JUST a word right here for this camp of Bank Garden.

The gulch pocket in which the camp was situated was a garden indeed. No fairer spot can be imagined.

If there was a blot upon Nature's handiwork, that blot was the camp itself—a blot that was made all the blacker by the hordes of cut-throats that made it their stronghold.

The camp had been located, as all such camps are, by prospectors, and it might have grown and prospered, but before it could get a fair start Dusty Dick, the notorious outlaw known as the "Dark Dread," swooped down and captured it, giving the rightful owners their choice between death and submission.

The owners had named the camp, and the outlaws had never seen fit to change the name.

When first discovered one of the discoverers had exclaimed, "A garden!" And upon their striking it "rich" and locating, another declared it was as good as a bank.

Your mining-camps are named upon trifling incidents, sometimes, and so it had come about that this one was called Bank Garden.

The outlaw, Dusty Dick, was a terror to the whole Southwest.

Having a powerful band at his command, he had never yet encountered a force large enough to overcome him, and he was lord of all that country.

He had been hunted and hounded by Americans and Mexicans alike, but had ever managed to make it convenient to be on the other side of the line when things got too warm for him from either party.

He was Spanish by birth but talked English like a native of our land, and his dark skin had given him his nickname "Dark Dread." For the same reason he had been dubbed "Dusky Dick."

His band was a horde of brigands, made up after the manner of such bands in Dusty Dick's own country. They were ripe for any evil, and more than once had taken and held persons for ransom. And that, too, with success. There was no deed of daring too risky for them to un-



possibly be a mistake it wouldn't help you any, for we'd give you the benefit of the doubt and hang you anyhow."

"He can bet his life we would!—beggin' your pardon, cap'n, fer stickin' in my lip," cried Gideon Grips. "Thar's war to ther knife 'tween us and you, Deader-than-wood Richard, and that war will be ended right hyer, you bet."

"You needn't beg pardon of me for talking that way, pard," the brigand chief waived.

"But, I tell you you do mistake," urged the prisoner. "Search me, if you will, and see if you find anything on me to prove what you charge."

"What's ther use?" cried Rooster Rube. "We wouldn't expect ter find ye comin' hyer with yer name branded on ye."

"That's what's ther matter!" cried another of the crowd. "Et ain't no use."

"What is your name, then, since you deny your identity as Deadwood Dick?" asked the Dread.

"My name is Philip Phillips."

"Philip Phillips lies like sin," cried Rooster Rube. "Confound it, what is ther use o' your holdin' out when so many of us knows ye?"

"What ar' ye going to do with him, though, Captain Dick?" inquired old Gideon. "A new idee has jest popped inter my mind, the reason I ask. Do ye *really* mean ter yank him?"

"Certainly I mean it! What else do you think I would do with him? But, what is your idea?"

The old man was about to respond, when a woman's scream was heard.

All looked in the direction whence the sound had come, and beheld a woman running toward them, arms outstretched.

"Save him!" she cried. "Save him! oh! save him!"

"Thunder!" cried Dusky Dick, and his face grew darker than ever. "How has she managed to escape?"

Even as he questioned, a hideous old hag was seen running after the woman, and as she ran she called out loudly to the crowd:

"Ketch that she wildcat! Ketch her! I'll bet I'll scar her purty face fer her, fer the trick she played on me! Don't let her 'scape, and don't let her git no weapon!"

On the woman came, apparently seeing nothing but the prisoner, and she pushed her way toward him till roughly stopped by Dusky Dick.

"Here, what means this?" he demanded.

"Richard! Richard!" the woman — rather girl — cried, "why did you venture here? They will murder you!"

"My God!" the prisoner gasped, as if intended to be unheard. "Kate—"

But he cut himself short at that, and at the same instant the crowd broke out with a wild whoop.

"Ain't that ther proof?" they yelled. "She has called him Richard; what more d'ye want 'n' that? Let's string him right up, Dusky Dick; let's have ther fun right now while we all feel like et."

"No! no! no!" the young woman cried, wildly. "Spare him, spare him! Take my life, if you will, but spare him!"

"Oh, yes, we are full of that, you bet!" laughed Dusky Dick, detaining her by force. "We prefer beauty to the beast, every time, my little tiger cat. Don't hurt yourself struggling so."

The young woman could not be more than twenty-two years of age, and was decidedly comely, though it could plainly be seen that her toilet had not had proper attention for many days. She fought like a tiger indeed, to free herself from the unwelcome restraint.

"Let me go, monster!" she cried. "Let me go! If you will kill him, show me the mercy to let me die with him."

The man had tried to force himself to be calm, but impossible.

He now tugged at his bonds till the veins stood out upon his face like ridges raised by the blows of a whip.

"Free me," he hissed, "and I'll fight the whole of you! Free me, and more than one of you shall bite the dust before you deal death to me. Free me, just long enough to rob you of—"

"Well, hardly," drawled the brigand chief. "We'll take care of you, and then we'll see that the lady is well cared for after that. Leave all that to us, and there will be nothing for you to worry about. Sorry not to oblige you, but it can't—"

"Curse you! I'll have—"

The desperate struggling of the prisoner had loosened his feet, which had been tied together underneath his horse, and he slipped over and would have toppled off had it not been for old

Gideon, who sprung forward and caught him in his arms, and together they fell to the ground, the old man having stumbled over a stone.

"No, ye don't!" he cried aloud, the next moment. "No, ye don't, me noble Dicky Deadwood! Not while Gideon Grips is around ter take a hand in things. Whar's that ar' rope ye ar' goin' ter use, cap'n?"

With a wild scream, at that, the woman fainted, and Dusky Dick gave her into the arms of the old hag, saying:

"Here, Jezebel, take her back; and mind, you do not harm one hair of her head, if you value your withered old life. Bring a rope, boys, and short work shall be made of Deadwood Dick. Bring him to his feet, Gideon, and we'll show you how we do such business here at Bank Garage."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ANOTHER PLAN ADOPTED.

GIDEON GRIPES, showing the strength of a Hercules almost, lifted the prisoner upon his feet and held him firmly.

"Hyer he is!" he cried. "Bring ther rope, and I'll show ye how Gideon kin tie a necktie."

A rope was being brought with all haste.

"Hyer is yer rope, and a good one," sung out Red Mike, captain of the guardsman Gideon had captured so neatly. "Hook et onto him, and we'll have him danglin' in air in no time."

"What! you hyer yet?"

Old Gideon looked at the man in some surprise.

"Hyer yet? What do ye mean by that 'ar'?"

"What do I mean by et? Dusky Dick, is et possible that yer camp is ongarded at this time?"

"Zounds!" and the brigand chief brought out a favorite Spanish exclamation in English with full force. "I did not think of that. Back to your posts, all of you, and see that you keep your eyes open."

With a disappointed air the men turned to obey.

They wanted to see this hanging of their very worst foe, which they had looked to as a rare treat.

"Mought I be allowed to make a suggestion, cap'n?" asked old Gideon.

"Certainly, old man."

"Et ain't that I want ter meddle, ye onderstand, but with my own neck in danger, same as ther rest of ye, I have some interest in things hyer."

"Certainly, certainly; what is it?"

"Well, seein' that we have got hold o' Deadwood Dick, ain't et likely that he has got men some'r's around? He wouldn't come here all alone, I wouldn't think, would you?"

"Of course he wouldn't. He must have men near at hand."

"Then, I should say, double ther guard at each place, and so make double sure that his men don't steal a march on us us."

"That is a rattling good idea, old man, and I'll do it," Dusky Dick cried. "You have got something in that hairy old head of yours, that is sure. And, while I'm at it, I'll send out new men altogether."

As it was then within an hour of the time for changing the guards, the chief sent out two other captains in place of Red Mike and Rooster Rube, giving them twelve men each with which to hold the approaches to the camp against any foe that might make the attempt to get in.

This business occupied a little time, and when it was finally done the passion for the hanging had slightly cooled.

"Now fer ther hangin'," said Gideon, as he proceeded to make a noose in the end of the rope.

"I want to ask you something first, old man," spoke the chief.

"All right: what is et?"

The old fellow stopped in what he was doing and looked up.

"Why, just at the time when that woman came out here yelling so, you had said you had a new idee in mind. What was it?"

"That's so, by ther day o' doom!" the old fellow exclaimed. "She yooped et up so that she knocked et clean out of my thinker. Why, I was goin' ter ask ye ef ye knowed much about this Deadwood Dick."

"I know he is the devil himself at detective business, and if he had half a chance he would bring me and my men to trouble, the same as he has done for many another man, and I had made up my mind that if he ever got into my power I'd make short work of him."

"That's a good idea, I allow, and I prove of et; but, my idee was that it was a grand chance fer you ter make a big haul."

"How!"

"How! Don't ye know that Deadwood Dick is worth a million dollars at the least?"

"No! Is that so?"

"I told ye me and my band kem through his place on our way out hyer, and thar they tell that he's a reg'lar Crushus, fer wealth. Owns the hull city, and has a bar'l o' money besides."

"And your idea was to hold him for ransom?"

"Jest so."

"That's a risky piece of work, with such a man. The whole Goverment would come to his rescue."

"Not a bit more 'n et will come, anyhow, ef ye hang him, fer you can bet he never kem hyer alone. But, they would find us tough ter git, here in this pocket. We could defy 'em."

"I'll be hanged if I don't see something in what you say. I've a notion to try the scheme."

"Try et by all means," urged Gideon, and he threw the rope away from him and far over the heads of the crowd.

"I'll think about it, anyhow," decided the brigand chief. "By the way, prisoner, do you still deny that you are Deadwood Dick?"

The prisoner smiled.

"I find it's no use denying it further," he made answer. "You have got me dead to rights, and I might as well own up and try to make the best of it. Yes, I am Deadwood Dick."

"That's ther tune!" cried old Gideon, joyfully. "That was what brought him to time, Dusky Dick. He sees a chance for his life, now, and he ain't goin' ter let et slip ef he knows et. Life is worth more'n moaney, every time!"

"That's et," cried the crowd. "We'll hold him fer ther kerdooleum."

"What price are you going to value me at?" the prisoner inquired.

"How much do you think your life is worth to you?" Dusky Dick asked.

"Well, about ten thousand dollars, maybe."

"Pshaw! that would not pay us for our trouble. Why, that's the price I have set on the head of that gal that came tearing out here—By the way, how is it she is acquainted with you?"

"Mebby et's his wife," suggested Gideon.

"So it strikes me," agreed the chief.

"No," the prisoner denied, "she is not my wife, or indeed anything to me. She has mistaken me for some one else. She called me Richard, that I admit, but Richard is a common name. I never saw her before, and know nothing about her."

"How was et, then," one man demanded, "that you called her Kate? I heerd ye call her that, wi' my own ears."

"If you heard it at all it must have been with your own ears, that is sure," the prisoner said, smiling. "But, you are mistaken, I think. You have understood something wrong."

"That won't do," declared the chief. "Now that it is brought to my mind, I remember your muttering that name half aloud. You had better own up, if you expect to get this chance for your life. What do you say?"

"Well, I have to admit it, then."

"Then you are Deadwood Dick and his wife?"

"Yes."

"What oily liars you are, the pair of you; for she gave me the straightest kind of a story about herself, and you began by telling another, or commencing one."

The prisoner smiled again.

"All is fair in love and war," he remarked.

"Now ye have got 'em down fine," insisted Gideon, "and ye want to sock et right to 'em. Make et just a quarter of a million fer the pair, and narray a cent discount, either."

"Hooray! Hooray!"

So yelled the excited horde.

"You make the figure a pretty stiff one, old man," the prisoner observed.

"Et ain't none too stiff, though, fer I know ye kin stand et; I have seen that city ye own, and I know how ye are heeled. What do you say, Dusky Dick?"

"Gideon, you are a whooper!" the brigand chief complimented. "That is the figure we'll make it, but I'll be hanged if I see our way clear for getting the money. Think we can do it?"

"We kin make a try fer et, anyhow, cap'n. I don't brag of my head, but if thar's anything in et that will help on ther skeem any, you ar' welcome to et."

"Mister," spoke up Mrs. Grips, "you jest trust Gideon, ef thar's any divilment ter be hatched. I know Gideon, and he's jest a terror, he is. Great—"

"You hold your jaw, old woman," Gideon sharply ordered.

"That's all right, Gid, that's all right; I hev had my say. But, it's so, an' you can't deny et. Ask ary one of our sons hyer. Ask Pete's wife, Sally, hyer. Ask her two boys hyer. See what they'll all tell ye 'bout Gideon G. Grips. By ther—"

"Shut your head, I tell you," thundered Gideon. "You let me stand on my own bottom, and let 'em find me out fer just what I am."

The old woman subsided, with many a wink and nod to the crowd around.

She had had her say.

Dusky Dick and his crew were all laughing at the old woman's earnestness, and the chieftain now remarked:

"Your good word for your husband, Mrs. Grips, is all right, and it supports the good opinion I had already formed of him. But, are all these men your sons?"

"Every one of 'em, sir," the old hag declared, waving her arm proudly to indicate them all. "And I'm proud of 'em, too. Every one of 'em is a man, with most of ther good p'ints of their dad. We had no gals in our family, you bet! By ther great—"

"If you don't shut your infernal head, old woman, I'll knock et shut fer ye!" the old man now severely threatened.

"All right, Gid! all right; et's shut now; I had ter answer a proper question, ye know."

"Ye more'n answered et. Don't get her mill ter runnin', cap'n, whatever ye do. Thar's no end to et, ef I ain't by ter shut her trap fer her. She knows me, you bet, and when I say shut, shut et's got ter be."

The old woman smiled, and such a smile! and nodded her head this way and that to the crowd, as if to say—"My Gideon is talking now."

"Then you think we can get the money, do you?" Dusky Dick asked.

"Course I do," declared Gideon. "I don't boast what I kin do, as I said before, but if you and me puts our heads together I'll bet we kin git up a skeem that will work."

"We'll try it, anyhow. Take the prisoner away, boys, and see that he don't have the ghost of a chance to get off. Don't harm him in any way, for if we come to terms with his people, we'll have to give him up in good condition.. You, Grips, come with me and we'll have a talk.

## CHAPTER V.

### A DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

GIDEON GRIPES gave some directions to his family about going into temporary camp, and then followed the brigand chief into the saloon.

This was a rough-looking den, dirty and ill-kept, which the band evidently made a sort of headquarters.

There was a bar, but it seemed to be dry, the supply evidently exhausted.

"Now," said the chief, as he sat down and invited Gideon to do the same, "let me hear what plan you can suggest."

"Great day o' doom!" the old man exclaimed. "Et ain't fer me ter try ter put my head before yourn, cap'n. I couldn't think o' doin' sech a thing as that. I'd only prove what a ole fool I am."

"You are over modest, old fellow. You have the advantage of me in years, and if age counts for anything, it stands to reason that you ought to know most."

"But, do ye think I could give p'ints to Dusky Dick ther Dark Dread?"

"Who can say? That is just what I want to find out."

"Then ye want me ter toot my bazoo?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"Well, then, jest let me think hard fer a minnit, and I'll see what I kin hatch fer ye."

The old fellow rested his head upon his hand for a moment and was lost in deep study.

"Wull, mebby I have got et," he spoke, presently.

"Let me hear from you then."

"You hev been thinkin' too, I s'pose."

"Yes."

"All right, then ef I git off ther track you can put me on ergain. And, ef my notions ar' wild, jest stop me and say so; or, ef ye don't see my meanin', or how things is ter come out, chip in yer questions."

"All right."

"Wull, then, hyer is what I've thunk up: You send a man down ter Bristol City—that's ther name of Deadwood Dick's home base, ye know—and send word what's wanted. At ther same time let ther man carry a message in the prisoner's own writtin', ter show et ain't no false report."

"Good enough; but, it will be as good as death to the messenger; or, anyhow, he will not come back again."

"That's all right; send a feller what ye'd as leave lose out of yer band as not."

"No, we are off the track, old man."

"How's that?"

"Why, they would have to send the man back to let us know what their answer is."

"No, ye don't ketch on. Deadwood Dick must himself order 'em what ter do, and they must come right down with ther dudads 'fore they git him. See?"

"Then maybe they'll make use of the man to guide them here."

"That may be. Or, if ye want to, send yer best man, and say to 'em ef he is harmed it will mean sartain death to Deadwood Dick."

"I think that's the plan."

"All right; that part is settled, then. Does yer best man know ther way out thar?"

"Don't think he does, but he can find it."

"One of my boys kiug go with him. That will be a check on both of 'em, and no chance fer a crooked deal."

"No danger of that, if I send Rooster Rube."

"He's yer man, then, and with him we'll send my son Sam, as good a one fer ther job as I kin pick."

"That is good enough so far; now comes the worst part of it."

"What's that?"

"How to make the trade with them."

"That's so, fer both sides will be wonderful sp'cious."

"And that is the sticking point. How is it to be done? Now is the time to test yourself."

"Wull, let me think—I hev et, by ther day o' doom!"

"So soon?"

"Right on tap; et jest kem to me."

"Well, what is it?"

"Et's fer us ter say how et shall be did, ye know. We'll send 'em word what our rule is. They must send ther money by half a dozen men, and let ours come back with them."

"Well?"

"Then, say further, that if one more'n the half a dozen comes, et won't be no dicker; and let 'em know we'll have men on ther watch ter see. Tell 'em ter come to a sartain place, and thar stop and send one man on alone till he meets a man from our camp."

"I see; and what then?"

"In ther mean time, let 'em hold our two men fer security, and if they see anything crooked they have full leave ter kill 'em—we havin' ther same right, then, ter do ther same with Deadwood Dick and his wife. Their man and our man will have a talk, and our man will be posted ter tell 'em what ter do, an' I reckon et won't take long ter dicker."

"I see one thing, old man."

"What's that?"

"You are aiming to make the trade a fair one."

"Ain't that what you want, cap'n? Ef et ain't, of course them ar' plans ar' no good."

"I'd rather get hold of their money and kill Deadwood Dick, too. That would be killing two birds with one stone, don't you see."

"But, that would make et hot for us."

"Any hotter than it would be if we let Deadwood Dick go free?"

"Wull, that's so. Et's about as broad as et's long, I should say, Dusky Richard."

"Then what's going to be done?"

"How would et do ter let ther noble Richard go free, and let him come with a boodle ter redeem his wife?"

"Not to be trusted. He is too great a general to take any chances with. He is in my power, and here he must stay. I'll tell you what it is, old man, I am afraid the scheme won't work."

"What skeem?"

"Getting the ransom money."

"Great day o' doom! Ain't goin' ter give et up so easy, ar' ye? Ain't et worth workin' fer? Think of et—a hull quarter-million!"

"Then you still see a hope? Remember, I want it worked so that we can get the money and still do away with Deadwood Dick. I'd never know an hour's peace with him on my track."

"You could light out fer some other land."

"Do you think the world would be big enough to hide me from him? No, he must die!"

"Then ye might as well take him out an' hang him now, an' make sure of him, I should say. But, hyer's another thought."

"And what's that?"

"Why not go and have a talk with him, and see what plan he can suggest, sence he is willin' to ante up the quarter-million? S'pose I go and have a chin with him, to see what he'll say."

"No, it won't do to kill him yet, if we have any idea of getting the money. We'll have to have him alive to show when it comes to making the deal, you see."

"Yes, that's so; he's worth more alive than dead, jest now."

"And then about going to see him, you might do that—"

"Wouldn't et be more proper fer you ter go?"

"No, I'll let you attend to it, old man. Just put it to him straight, and see what he will say. He's a man to invent, and he'll have a way to work it, no doubt about that."

Nearly all the band were in the saloon, and were for the most part listening to this planning.

At that point Stuttering Stephen, the Sweet Singer, entered.

He advanced to where his chief sat.

"K-K-K-K-K-Captain," he cackled out, "that p-p-p-p-prisoner w-w-w-w-w—"

"Great Scott!" cried the chief. "Why don't you sing?"

"That—prisoner—he—wants—ter—see—ye—ter—oncet, and—he—wants—ter—see—ye—bad."

"What does he want?"

"He w-w-w-w-w—"

"Sing, blast you, sing!"

"He—wants—ter—see—ye—'bout—ther—bargain—fer—his—gettin'—free; sing—iddley—diddley—diddle—diddle—dee."

"All right; you go back and tell him that I'm going to send this man, Mr. Grips, to him, and he can arrange every thing with him. And, you want to put a tune to it and sing it."

"All right, K-K-K-K-K-K—"

He kept right on cackling till he had passed the door, and not a man in the place heard him finish it.

"Ye see," cried Gideon, "he is anxious 'bout et, cap'n, and I'm of ther mind that et won't be no hard matter ter pick up that 'ar lump o' stuff. I'm fer doin' et, even ef we have ter let him go. But, 'course my voice don't count in et."

"We'll see what he has to say, before we decide further. You go and see him, and let him think he is going to get free, if the money is forthcoming. Let him think we are going to deal square with him."

"Well, ef you say go; but, et seems like puttin' myself for'd in your business, Dusky Dick."

"No matter how it seems, you go." That was final, and Mr. Gripes obeyed.

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### DISCARDING THEIR MASKS.

In the mean time the fainted woman, who had been taken away by the old woman, had come to in the cabin to which she had been borne.

The old Jezebel had tied a rope about her prisoner's waist, which was secured to one of the inner logs of the cabin, and her arms had been pinioned at the elbows, leaving them only limited freedom.

The young woman gave a start as she opened her eyes.

"He! he! he!" chuckled the consort of Gideon. "I have ye safe now, my wild-cat."

"Where is *he*?" the young woman demanded.

"Your dear Deadwood Dick? Wal, I wouldn't wonder ef he'd stretched hemp by this time, my dear."

"What do you mean? They have not harmed him?"

"No, not ef hangin' won't harm, I don't reckon they have; I guess that's ther worst they've done ter him."

"Then they have killed him? My God, why did they not hang me with him? Why have they left me? But, woman, tell me, *is* it true?—*have* they killed him?"

"I see ther story is straight; *you* don't deny that he's that detective hound?"

"I paid no attention to what you said. Only tell me this—is he living or is he dead?"

"Wal, he's alive, yet, but I won't promise how long he will be."

"Thank Heaven! They *must* take my life if they are determined to kill some one, and let *him* go free. Yes, they must—they *shall* do that!"

"Which I don't reckon they will at all, my dear. Purty gals is at a premium hyer, ye see."

And again she chuckled at the anguish of her prisoner.

"But, what was it you called him?" the girl presently asked, choking back her sobs.

"I guess ye know well enough, gal."

"No, for I paid no attention to the name."

"Wal, then, I called him Deadwood Dick."

"What an odd name. But, there is a mistake; this man was never known by that name."

"He! he! he!" the old tramp laughed. "That is ther same dodge ther feller himself tried ter work, but et wasn't no use. He had ter own up at last. He! he! he!"

"I fail to understand you, old woman. Do you mean to tell me this man admitted his identity as Deadwood Dick?"

"Ter be sure I do. He! he! he!"

"And who and what is Deadwood Dick, if there be such a personage? What did you mean by detective hound?"

"I meant jest that, gal, a detective hound. That's what he is, and nothin' else. But, he has run on his last trail, I reckon, for he is in ther grip of Dusky Dick now."

"It is impossible for me to understand. And you would make it to appear that I am his wife?"

"Don't we *know* ye ar'?"

"No, you know nothing of the kind. My name, as I have told you repeatedly, is Kate Rossetyr, and it is nothing else. I am a single woman. And this man, whom you insist upon calling Deadwood Dick, is Mr. Richard VanDeyke."

"He! he! he! That's purty good, I vum et is, miss, a purty good yarn. But, et's no use, fer yer man has owned up, and you had better do ther same thing."

"You talk in riddles; I don't understand."

"That is ter say, ye *won't* understand. Wal, I don't blame ye, fer ye show that ye will stick to ther story ye have agreed ter tell, an' stick to et through thick an' thin. All right; but et ain't no use, as ye will find. When ye see yer man, ef ye ever do again, he will tell ye et ain't no use longer."

"You puzzle me, old woman. You won't take me to him now, so that I may hear from his own lips what he has to say?"

"Can't do that 'ar."

"Why?"

"Dusky Dick would kill me as he'd kill a dog. A life more or less don't make no difference ter him. He said bring ye here and see that ye didn't get out again, and I reckon I'll see to et that ye don't. Ye won't play another trick on me, you bet."

"It is pretty certain that I will not, if you intend to keep me bound in this fashion."

"And I'll do that, you bet. I'd do worse by you, if I dared; I'd scratch that face of yours so that it would spile your beauty, I tell ye I would!"

"You have no love for me, that I know, but I cannot yet understand why it is insisted that I am other than I am. I know not Deadwood Dick, though now I believe I have heard mention of his name somewhere."

"Oh, yes, of course ye have: he! he! he! By 'n' by et will come back to ye that ye ar' his wife, I reckon."

"What is the object in such a story?"

"See hyer, gal, et's foolishness fer you ter keep this up, when et is all settled who an' what ye ar'."

"And you tell me Richard VanDeyke has admitted that he is Deadwood Dick."

"Yes, that's what I tell ye."

"And he has said I am his wife?"

"Yes."

"If you speak the truth, then I am bewildered. But I do not believe you; I think you must be lying to entrap me into some manner of admission, though I know not what, for I have told you the whole truth already."

The old pilgrim laughed again, rocking herself to and fro on the low stool upon which she was seated.

A considerable time passed.

Finally there came a rap upon the door.

The Jezebel got up and opened the door, and there was Stuttering Stephen, the Singer.

"Wal, what do ye want, Singer?" she demanded.

"Je-Je-Je-Je-Je-Je-Je—"

"Jerusalem!" the old hag finished for him, in her own way. "Why don't ye jerk et out of ye? What do ye want?"

"Ther k-k-k-k-k-k-k-k-k—"

"Yes, ther captain; and what is et he wants? Sing, now, and no more of your je-je-jerkin' and k-k-cacklin'."

"Ther—captain—he—wants—you—ter—bring—ther—gal—and—come—to—ther—saloon—at—oncet; sing—ri—ti—taddy, de—do—dum."

"Wants me ter fetch ther prisoner to ther saloon? What does he want that fer? But don't stop ter tell me, but jest lend a hand, and we'll take her there in no time."

"Where is it you would take me?" the girl asked, in fright.

"To ther captain's office, my daisy."

"No, no, do not do that, but rather let him come here to me."

"Wal, that's cool, too. Guess et will have ter be as *he* says, my fine lady. I only wish et was as *I'd* say, you bet I'd take ye thar in *style!*"

The objections of the prisoner were not heeded, but she was set free from the rope around her waist, and then, held by the old

hag and Stuttering Steve, was taken to the saloon.

Entering there, it was found that Dusky Dick and all his band were assembled, except those on guard and those who were out of camp on other duties.

And, too, there were old Gideon Gripes and his family, and the prisoner who had admitted his identity as Deadwood Dick.

It may be mentioned just here that the outlaw chief's band consisted of about sixty men, all told, of whom about half were now in the camp.

When the three entered the room, Deadwood Dick was the first to speak.

"Kate," he said, "it is of no use carrying on the deception further. I have admitted my identity, and you may do the same. I have told these rascals that I am Deadwood Dick, and that you are my wife."

The young woman looked at him in blankest amazement.

"Dick," she gasped, "I—I hardly understand."

"It is plain enough," answered the other prisoner, smiling sadly. "We simply admit that we are Dick Bristol and wife; or, Deadwood Dick, as *I* am better known, and *you*, as Kodak Kate."

"Have you gone out of your mind, Dick?"

"Not in the least. We are in a trap, and, admitting our identity, there is a possibility of our getting out of it again. I am going to buy our liberty."

As he said this, he looked straight into the woman's eyes, putting all possible earnestness into his words.

She cast her eyes upon the floor.

"Well, I admit it, since you do," she said, in low tone.

"That is right; it is the only way open to us, Kate. No need to carry the deception further. You are no longer Kate Rossetyr, but Kate Bristol, my wife; or, in other words, Mrs. Deadwood Dick. Now, men of Bank Garden, be satisfied."

"What did I tell ye?" cried Gideon Gripes. "Et took *me* ter deal with him, an' I won him over. Ther case is a plain one, as anybody kin see."

Gideon, by the way, had spent half an hour or more with Deadwood Dick in the cabin in which he had been imprisoned, and on coming out had brought the prisoner with him to the saloon, when Kate had been sent for.

"That is all we want of the woman," declared Dusky Dick. "Take her back again, Jezebel, and see to it that she does not get away. But harm her not, for she is the most valuable prisoner we ever had yet."

"Yes, see well to it that no harm comes to her," added Deadwood Dick. "If it happens, woe to this camp when I get free, that's all!"

"I'll take keer of her, I'll take keer of her, never fear," chuckled the old Fury. "Come on with me, Stutterin' Steve, and help me get her safe back again. I'll take keer of her, cap'n."

"See that you do."

"Be of good courage, Kate," the prisoner called out, as she was taken away. "The way of deliverance is about to open for us. No need to carry on the deception further; admit freely that you are *my wife*."

"I will do that," the girl called back, "though I do not understand. It is enough for me that I have had it from your own lips. I trust all to you, Dick; I trust all to you. God help us that we may get out of the power of these devils in human guise."

#### CHAPTER VII.

##### ANOTHER PRISONER MADE.

THE brigand chief looked after the woman for a moment without speaking, or until she was no longer in sight from where he sat.

"That is rather strong language," he then quietly remarked.

"You ar' right et is," agreed Gideon Gipes. "Hadn't we better sock on another thousand fer that?"

"Don't take the truth so to heart," spoke the other prisoner, boldly. "And as for raising the ransom, don't try that, for it won't bear stretching another dollar. It is at the outside limit, now."

"What would you do, were I to raise it to half a million at one jump?" asked Dusky Dick.

"I would tell you to do your worst."

"And do you know what that would be?"

"Death, of course."

"And maybe in a manner to add to its horrors. Do you know, Gideon, I have a notion to do that?"

"Et won't do, partner."

"Why not?"

"Et would take him too long to raise et. It will take time fer him ter git even ther quarter million together, for he don't carry it in his vest pocket, as ye know."

"That's so, I suppose. Well, Deadwood Dick, you have talked this all over with Mr. Gipes, he tells me."

"I have."

"And you have some plan in mind by which the money can be brought here?"

"Yes."

"Yes, his plan is all right," declared Gideon, speaking up. "I was about half a hour in ther cabin wi' him, as ye know, and I sifted him thoroughly."

"Well, what is the plan?"

"Let me ask one question," said Dick.

"What is it?"

"Is it your intention to deal fairly with me?"

"Oh, certainly; you may depend on that."

"On your word, man to man?"

"Yes, I swear it, if that will satisfy you."

"It is all I can ask, of course, and I shall have to believe you. I shall do the same by you."

"That is understood."

"Then you are ready for my plan?"

"Yes."

"I will give it. Now, as you know, a quarter of a million dollars is no small sum. There will be a risk in bringing it here."

"That's so."

"And it can't be trusted to one man, or two men."

"True again."

"I will write to my manager, and you read the letter, of course, telling him what to do. He will raise the money as soon as he can, and send it here under a guard of twelve picked men."

"Whew! That's quite a force."

"What does it amount to, against your fifty or sixty?"

"Well, that's true, too."

"They will bring the money here and deliver it to you, and then, when you have counted it and made sure there is no deception about it, I and my wife are to go free and be allowed to go away with my men."

"That sounds fair enough."

"Better'n anything you an' me could think up, hey, Dusky Dick?" cried Gideon Gipes.

"Yes, that I have to admit, Gideon."

"Do you agree to the plan?" asked Deadwood Dick.

"Yes; I think you mean us fair."

"As you will find I do, as fair as you mean me. You may have heard something about Deadwood Dick. I came to your terms because you have my wife in your power. If it were I alone in danger, I would defy and let you do your worst."

"That is big talk."

"I mean it, every word."

"Well, is that all of your plan?"

"No, he's got more of et," chipped in Gideon.

"Then let's have the rest."

"Well, you are to send four of your men to my camp with this letter I will write, and they are to be held there until my safe return, when I will set them free to return to you."

"What's that for?"

"For security against your bare word, sir."

"Then you do not take my word?"

"Would you take mine, were I to offer to go myself and get this money and bring it to you?"

"Hardly."

"Then don't blame me for taking some measures for my own safety. When you got the money you might trap my men and put us all to death, for, this bargain of ours does not end the warfare between us."

"I hardly supposed it could."

"No, for as soon as I have gone home and released your men, then, I warn you, I shall be after you doubly hot. You will have the mean while in which to seek your safety. These, then, are the terms I will agree to, for the sake of my wife. What have you to say to them?"

"I could not ask anything more, of course. I agree to it, all around. You prepare the letter, and I will select the men who are to take it."

At that moment loud voices were heard outside.

"What's that?" asked the chief.

Some men stepped to the door to see.

"It's Injun Jack and Rifle Rob come back bringin' another prisoner," they reported excitedly.

"Good enough!" exclaimed Dusky Dick. "The more the merrier, if they are paying ones. Tell them to bring the prisoner right in here."

"They're comin'."

"Is it a man?"

"Yes."

"We'll see what the fellow is, Gideon, and then finish this business afterward."

"All right, cap'n. Is all yer band in, now?"

"Yes, they are all here, now, except the twenty four on guard."

"Then ye hev got a good fistful of 'em, bless me ef ye ain't, an' no wonder ye ar' called ther Dark Dread."

The brigand chief smiled at the compliment, but said nothing.

Now entered the new-comers with their prisoner.

"Wull, we hev made a haul, cap'n," one of the men called out.

"So I see, boys. What's it worth?"

"We don't know, but he had quite a roll of ther good green with him, an' he may have more where that kem from."

They were advancing while speaking.

The prisoner was a young man, maybe thirty years old, of good features but having a scowling brow.

He was well clad, armed, but now bound and helpless, yet he faced his foes with a fearless front, as though defying them to do their worst.

Looking about him as he was led to where Dusky Dick and the others were, his eyes rested upon Deadwood Dick, and with a start he exclaimed:

"Dick VanDeyke!"

Dusky Dick looked quickly at his other prisoner.

Deadwood Dick was smiling carelessly as he returned the stare of his fellow-prisoner.

"You make a mistake this time," he said quietly.

"A mistake! Don't you suppose I know you, Dick VanDeyke?"

"You seem to think you do."

"Hang it, what do you mean? Have you denied your identity here? Curse you, were I free I would have your life's blood!"

"Well, well, what's this?" questioned Dusky Dick, getting interested in the matter. "What's between you two?"

"There's nothing between us," answered Deadwood Dick; "it is all on one side, and it is plain that he has mistaken me for another—that is, for the person whose name I assumed."

"Then there is a Dick VanDeyke?"

"Oh, yes, there is such a person, and I hoped to pass for him here and keep my own identity a secret."

"You infernal liar!" cried the other prisoner, in a rage. "What is the use of your saying that? I know you, know you well, and if these men will free us both, I will fight you to the death here and now."

Dick still smiled serenely.

"You might possibly get the worst of it, unless you are an expert with your weapons," he remarked.

"Not from you, curse you. But, who do you pretend to be?"

"I am Deadwood Dick, Junior, as I have had to admit to these men here. That is what I am called."

"You are the prince of liars, you mean. Why, don't try to make me out a fool altogether, Dick VanDeyke. I know you, and you know me—Raybold Brandson. You know why I am here."

"On the contrary, sir, I do *not* know why you are here. Never saw you before in my life that I am aware of."

The other stepped nearer, as if to make sure of his recognition.

"You lie like the infernal!" he hissed.

"Say, what do you make of this, Gideon?" demanded Dusky Dick, turning to his already trusted comrade in crime.

"What do I make of et, cap'n? Why, I take et this Deadwood Dick must look somethin' like t'other feller; and, come ter think of et, mebbey that's what led to his takin' his name in ther first place."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### COMPLICATIONS ARISING.

At that Deadwood Dick smiled.

"You are a close guesser, old man," he said.

"Then I hit et right, did I? Wull, et wasn't hard ter guess et."

"What confounded jugglery is this, anyhow?" the other prisoner hotly demanded. "Don't I know you as well as I know myself, Dick VanDeyke?"

"It is only too plain that you don't, in this instance, sir," was the cool reply. "You mistake me for the real VanDeyke, that is true, and with some good reason; but, I am not he."

"Tell me next that I am deaf, dumb, blind, and a fool to boot, will you?"

"It is not necessary to go so far, sir."

"You know you are lying, Dick VanDeyke. You know me, and with mighty good reason you fear me. Where, I demand, is Kate Rossetty?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Dick. "I see how you have been misled, sir. That woman was, and is, my wife, Kate Bristol. She is here, a prisoner like we ourselves, but we hope to get away in due time."

"Here? Kate here? Heavens, she must be saved—"

"Don't trouble yourself further about her," said Dick. "Being my wife, I will attend to her rescue myself."

"Your wife? You lie—you lie! Where is she? I demand to hear this from her own lips, before I will or can believe it. Where is she, Sir Chief?"

He turned to Dusky Dick.

"Have the woman brought here at once," the chief ordered. "I am interested in this question, now."

Some men went out immediately in obedience to the command.

"You are welcome to bring her," said the other prisoner, as coolly as he had spoken to all. "I think she will convince you of the truth of it, sir."

"She cannot, if it is she. And if it is

she, then this camp will be the place where one or the other of us must fall. These men will let us fight, I know, and then beware of Raybold Brandson!"

Dick smiled disdainfully.

"I know what your cause of quarrel was with VanDeyke," he declared, "but I have no quarrel with you. None the less, if I am forced to protect myself against you, let me warn you in turn to beware of Deadwood Dick."

"Et do beat all," cried Gideon Gipes. "Darn me ef et wouldn't make up a good story, if anybody could write et out."

"Truth knocks fiction all hollow," observed Dusky Dick.

Further talk was had while they awaited the coming of the woman prisoner, but it is needless to quote it all.

The men who had gone out presently returned, bringing with them the old hag Jezebel and her charge.

The young woman was pale, and her lips were tightly compressed.

She was brought forward, and as she came her eyes fell upon the new prisoner and for a single second she was seen to start.

The next instant she asked:

"What is wanted of me again?"

"You are wanted," spoke up Deadwood Dick, "to inform this man that you are Kate Bristol, my wife. He will not believe that I am Deadwood Dick."

"You were quick to speak," said Dusky Dick, in a tone of objection. "I was going to be the one to speak first."

"I had to answer my wife's question, sir."

"Well, it's all right."

"Of course you are Deadwood Dick," the woman said, boldly, "and I am your wife, as you say. Is that all you want me to reply to?"

"Kate Rossetyr, you know you tell what is not true!" cried Brandson, hotly. "What is the use of such deception? You know me as well as I know you, and you can't get out of it."

"I know you not," was the bold reply, and she looked him full in the face.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Deadwood Dick. "This is the woman whom you have seen, we admit, and whom you have taken to be another person, but she is my wife, and, if you molest her in any way, sir, you shall answer to me for it. Kate, beware of him."

"You need not warn me, Dick."

"Well, I'll be hanged," muttered Dusky Dick, "if this don't beat all. This is as good as a play. I'm only sorry I can't let you two fellows fight it out, for I would like to see the fun; but, that cannot be."

"Yes, let it be," urged Brandson. "Let us fight, and see if I do not show you a dead man in less than five minutes—"

"No, no, Deadwood Dick is worth more to us alive than dead, and it cannot be allowed."

"No, do not let them fight!" cried the woman. "Dick, you must not risk your life against his, you must not do that."

"Don't worry, my dear," spoke Dusky Dick. "We know the value of your husband to us, and we'll see to it that no harm comes to him, you can bet."

"And I'll see to it that harm does come to him," cried Brandson. "They may deceive you, but they can't fool me, for I know them. Beware of me, Dick VanDeyke, if I get a chance at your coward heart!"

Dick smiled at him in a cool way.

"Take the woman back again," ordered Dusky Dick, "and see to it that she gets no possible chance for freedom. And this man, take him and make him doubly secure, for if he gets free our dreams of that quarter million may go up in smoke. But, first, a word with you, Raybold Brandson, if that is your name."

"And it is," the prisoner cried. "I have no reason to hide my name."

"Where did you hail from?"

"Mexico City."

"And what is your rating there?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, how much are you worth?"

"Oh! Well, mighty little, I can tell you, if you think to hold me for ransom."

"Do you think your friends would ante ten thousand dollars for you?"

"No; and if they would, they have not got it to put up."

"Then it will probably mean a green grave here in the valley for you. Just think it over, and remember that you are in the hands of Dusky Dick, the Dark Dread, as I am called."

He waved his hand, then, and the prisoner was taken away.

"Now, Deadwood Dick," and Dusky Dick turned to him, "I want to know something about this strange affair. What does it all mean? I am sure you must know something about it."

"Yes, I do happen to know something about it," was the answer. "This man Brandson was the rival of Dick VanDeyke for the hand of a young woman named Kate Rossetyr, and has threatened to kill him, I believe. I and my wife happen to look something like that couple, and so his suspicion has fallen upon us."

"Well, where are the real VanDeyke and the young woman?"

"I don't know where they are now, but I suppose happily married and off on their tour. There is a romance back of it all."

"Well, I'll hear that at another time when I have nothing more important on hand. Here's another question I want to put to you, Deadwood Dick."

"What is that?"

"Did you come here alone?"

"No, for my wife was with me, though she fell into your hands first."

"That is not what I mean. I mean this—have you a force of men here with you?"

"No; wife and I are alone."

"You swear to that?"

"I do."

"What had you to hope in coming here against me in that way?"

"We came to spy upon you, to get the number of your men, and to learn all we could preparatory to an attack upon you."

"Well, you are cool about it, anyhow."

"So we have to be, in our work, and there is no use going back on it now that you have got us in the toils."

"And you have got the information you came for?"

"We have got a good deal more than we came for, for we have gotten ourselves into a bad fix."

"You are right you have, you are right you have. But enough of that for the present. We are going to act upon your suggestion, so get ready that letter to your people at home."

"What am I to write with? And how can I write if I am kept bound up this way like a turkey for roasting?"

"Well, that's so. I'll tell you what, I'll come around and see you after awhile, and you can write the letter in my presence."

"That suits me. You will then know there is no underhand work about it."

"Yes, I will work it that way. Men, take the prisoner out."

So Deadwood Dick was taken out and lodged again in the cabin prison from which he had been brought.

No sooner had he passed out of sight than old Gideon slapped the brigand chief on the leg, exclaiming:

"What did I tell ye, cap'n, what did I tell ye?"

"Well, what did you tell me, old man?"

"I'll tell ye again. But, clear these hyer idlers out first. Hyer, Elviry, you hev heard about enough ter sattersfy yer woman curiosity, so git. And all ther rest of ye."

He spoke to his own people, who were all present.

"All right, Gideon, all right!" the homely old woman answered. "Ef you say so, why of course et's my place ter 'bey; but by ther great—"

"Shut your fool head and git right out, I tell ye!" Gideon thundered. "How often must I warn ye not ter talk back ter me? I'll brain ye one of these days, even ef ye ar' ther mother of all my boys."

The old woman beat a hasty retreat, her "boys" with her, and the brigand chief enjoyed a laugh at Gideon's earnestness.

"That's ther only way ter deal with a blasted woman," Gideon growled. "Ye have ter make 'em know their place, I tell ye ye do. Now, let's see, what was I goin' ter say?"

## CHAPTER IX.

### PLOTS BEHIND PLOTS.

In their talk before, they had spoken out so that all might hear, unless at times when their words were not for other ears, and then they had dropped their voices to a whisper, almost.

Dusky Dick set Gideon straight on what he had started to say, and the old man took it up anew.

They talked now, however, in lowest tones.

"I tell ye et's workin' right into our hands, cap'n," the old fellow said impressively.

"Well, let me have your view of it, Gideon."

"Why, et's plain as day. Won't do ter let ther boys hear all we have ter say about et, though. Et couldn't be better ef we had had et made ter order."

"I suppose you know what you are talkin' about, and I have no reason to doubt your judgment."

"Et's jest like this hyer, cap'n. We will pick out four fellers that we don't keer much about anyhow, an' let 'em go on that errand to Bristol City, and if we don't ever see 'em again, no great matter."

"Ha! now I catch on. You are on the right track."

"Then, when the dozen fellows come hyer with ther money, we'll wipe 'em out, have ther money, and then do away with Deadwood Dick in short order."

"Splendid! And then I'll marry his widow, if she'll have me. Ha! ha! ha!"

"I hev no doubt but you'd be hardened enough ter do et, cap'n, but et would be yer death knell, I'm tellin' ye."

"How is that?"

"Why, she'd be yer death, sure."

"Oh! yes, no doubt; thought you had something else in mind."

"No, nothin' else; that would be enough fer you ter handle in one dose, I'm thinkin'."

"Well, about this business we have in hand."

"What do ye think of ther plan?"

"It's excellent, as I said. It is just what I wanted to get at."

"Then, with the money ours, and Deadwood Dick out of the way, what would be done then?"

"Why, what now?"

"Wull, ye see, et would be known thar at Bristol City whar Deadwood Dick is, and that men had set out ter find him. And when they didn't never come back no more, et's likely ther hull city would come ter see what was wrong."

"Ha! you are right. This place would not hold us against them."

"Nary a hold, for the regular army would come against us, as a last resort, and then we'd git et fer sure."

"Well, then, what?"

"I s'pose you count me an' my band in with you in ther deal?"

"Most assuredly."

"And you intend ter share that quarter million with all yer own band?"

"Well, yes; that is, they'll get some of it."

"Now look hyer, cap'n, what's ther matter wi' our gettin' that boodle and givin' all ther rest of 'em ther grand shake?"

Dusky Dick looked at the old man searchingly.

"Are you in earnest?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you would desert your band?"

"Wull, I would do et at first that way, but they could jine me when they could cut loose from ther rest hyer, some time."

"And you would help me get away with all of it?"

"Sure."

"Then that is a bargain. Let it be understood that we'll work it that way. There would no longer be any safety for me here, after killing Deadwood Dick, and I'd have to seek safety in flight."

"I'm yer man. But, what's my share ter be?"

"What do you want?"

"Et ain't fer me ter say, cap'n, fer I am here as a sort o' beggar anyhow, fer my own safety. What would ye give me?"

"I would be willing to give you a quarter of the quarter."

"That's jest what I'd 'a' asked of ye, cap'n."

"Then we are both satisfied. You help me, Gideon, and I'll prove true to you, and we'll both come out of this thing better off by a good many dollars. I am not blind to one thing."

"And what's that?"

"That I have about reached the end of my rope here."

"Wull, that's ther fact, when Deadwood Dick has got after ye, for he allus makes or breaks."

"Pity Red Roy didn't do him up, up there in the north country."

"What was that?"

"Never heard? Then I'll tell you about it, for I have read of it. He came mighty near doing it, but that man has the lives of a cat."

Thereupon, their scheme having been laid, the brigand chief gave Gideon the story of Deadwood Dick's campaign against the famous outlaw Red Roy,\* with which he was well informed.

The remainder of that day passed quietly.

The prisoners were well guarded, and care was taken that they should get no chance for escape.

On the following morning, it had been arranged, the four picked men were to set out for Bristol City, bearing the letter from Deadwood Dick to his manager there.

The letter, by the way, had been written during the afternoon, the chief going to the cabin where Dick was confined, taking paper and pen with him, and he did not take his eyes off the prisoner while he wrote.

When he had done, too, he removed the pen and ink, so that no secret message could possibly be written.

The letter was a straightforward one.

It set forth the case exactly as it was, and gave explicit directions what was to be done.

A quarter of a million dollars was to be sent, in the lightest possible form and least possible bulk, under guard of twelve good men, who were to be guided by the bearer.

It had been arranged, further, that one of Gideon's band should go with the four who were to give themselves up as hostage, to guide them to Bristol City and in turn guide Dick's men back to Bank Garden, and the one selected for that duty was called Sam.

Everything was arranged, and it only

needed the coming of the morning to see them set out upon their mission.

It was during the evening that Dusky Dick had a private talk with one of his men, the one who has been mentioned as Injun Jack.

The brigand chief had a room of his own over the saloon, and their conversation was had there.

"I have called you here for a little private chat, Jack," the chief opened.

"All right, cap'n, you will find me willin'."

"I have a plan in mind that I want you to help me to carry out."

"You never found me wantin' yet, did ye?"

"No."

"Then I reckon ye won't find me wantin' this hyer time."

"I know I can depend on you. Now, I want to ask you, what do you think of this man Gideon and his band?"

"I think they are a gang of holy terrors, cap'n, that's what I think of 'em; and the old man seems to be a man of hoss sense, too."

"Yes, that's all so."

"And the old woman, his wife, she is a rip-snorter with that tongue of hers, I'm tellin' ye. But, the men shut her up when she gets ter ragin' too high; and they kin all do et, too, even to ther youngsters."

"I've noticed that."

"They let her go it till they see she is goin' ter begin ter swear—that's what I s'pose is comin' next, anyhow, and then they jest wind her up short. I seen ther feller they call Pete take her by ther neck an' run her into ther cabin in a hurry jest now."

"Well, all that is nothing to us, of course. Do you think we want these people here with us?"

"Don't see but what they ar' all right."

"I don't question that, but you know the more we have the less the shares of you men."

"Yas, that's so."

"And we know these folks are wanted bad out in Texas."

"I guess I begin ter see what's in yer mind, cap'n. Wal, you kin count on me fer et."

"Yes, I was sure I could, but it may be that you do not understand just what I am coming at, for I have not told you all of it yet."

"Let us have ther hull of et, then."

"You know all about the plan to get a quarter of a million dollars out of Deadwood Dick."

"Yes."

"Well, this fellow Gideon has struck me for a plumb quarter of that."

"Ther doose he has! Wal, I guess ther rest of us will have somethin' ter say about that, won't we? I think we will, ef I know myself."

"That is just it, and here is what I want to keep secret for the time being: You know there is a price upon the heads of this man and his family, and after we have made use of them we'll sell them."

"A good idea!"

"But, keep it as still as death for the present."

"Oh, sure I'll do that."

"You see, on the sly I'll communicate with the authorities, and somehow arrange a plan for giving them up and rakin' the reward. And that reward I'll let you men have all to yourselves. See?"

"Yes, you bet."

"Then say nothing about it, and don't let Gideon suspect that anything is up. We'll get the quarter-million first, and then we'll attend to his case after that. We'll make them all prisoners, and fill our pockets at their expense. We are looking out for our own first, Injun Jack. Say nothing, and I may tell you something more after awhile."

## CHAPTER X.

### ESCAPE AND RECAPTURE.

#### "K-K-K-CAPTAIN!"

Out came the name at last, loud and shrill, after a considerable time spent in preliminary cackling.

No need to inquire who the caller was, for his tripping tongue told the tale for him. It was Stuttering Stephen, the Sweet Singer of the camp.

#### "K-K-K-Captain!"

So he called again, louder than before, and stuttering worse than ever in his hurry to get the word out.

"What can that fool want?" the brigand chief had exclaimed, at the first call he heard.

"Give et up," answered Injun Jack.

It was while this pair were in the room over the saloon.

Stuttering Steve was down in the street, and seeing the light in the window, had evidently judged by that where Dusky Dick was.

The chief strode to a window, and lifting it, called out:

"Well, what do you want, Singer?"

"Th-th-th-th-th-th-th—"

"Sing it, confound you, if you expect to get it out to-night!"

"H-h-h-h-how k-k-k-can a m-m-m-man s-s-s-s-sing when he's g-g-g-got t-t-t-to holler?"

"Why, sing loud, you idiot!"

"I d-d-d-didn't t-t-t-think of t-t-t—"

"Sing, curse you! or I'll stop your stuttering tongue for you forever with a bullet!"

The threat was enough, the Singer began to sing his loudest, and in that way made known what he wanted to inform his chief about.

"That—prisoner—has—got—out—somehow, captain, and—we—don't—know—where—he—is; with—a—ring—ding—diddy—"

"What prisoner?" thundered Dusky Dick.

"Ther—one—what—Injun—Jack—and Rifle—Rob—"

Dusky Dick waited to hear no more, but closed the window with a slam and made haste to get out, closely followed by Injun Jack, both swearing vigorously.

When they reached the street Stuttering Steve had just about finished his song reply to the last question.

Another man had come up by that time, and it was less trouble for him to tell the story.

"That feller Brandson has got out, somehow," he cried, "and we can't find him nowhere."

"What's this I hear?" broke in Gideon Gipes, as he came running to the spot from the direction of the cabin where he and his band were stopping.

"That last prisoner has escaped, Gideon," informed the chief.

"Scatter, then, and find him!" Gideon shouted.

"Nobody knows whar ter look," one man responded.

"Look everywhere," roared Dusky Dick.

"Yas, and we must look out fer Deadwood Dick, now, with him out," suggested Gideon.

"Zounds! Yes, you are right. Men, double the guard around Deadwood Dick's prison at once, and see that no harm comes to him. If you let him be killed, away goes all hope of that quarter-million!"

"And look out fer ther gal, too," cried Gideon. "You know what ther diffikiltiy is, 'tween them fellers, cap'n."

"Yes, that's so. See that the woman is not carried off. A hundred dollars to the man who will capture that fellow—alive, of course."

"I lev an idee, cap'n."

It was Gideon who offered this.

"What is it?"

"Why not put ther gal in my cabin, whar

\* HALF DIME LIBRARIES 770, 776, 782.

Elviry and Sal kin watch her, and you kin bet nothin' will happen to her. Then ther men that's guardin' that cabin kin be of use som'ers else."

"That is a good idea, and I'll do it, for that old hag, Jezebel, is about played out anyhow, and not fit to watch over her and take care of her. Come on, and we'll make the change at once. Rustle, boys, and get that man if you can!"

All was bustle in a moment.

"And hyer's another thought," suggested Gideon.

"What is it?"

"Better send word out to ther men on guard in ther passes ter look out he don't git by 'em."

"Yes, yes, that's so."

"They ar' on ther lookout fer fellers comin' in, ye know, and one goin' out might not ketch their eyes."

"I'll do it at once. Here, Joe, Dan—you run out to the guards and tell them to look sharp for an escaped man. Tell them not to let him pass if they have to kill him."

The men were off immediately, with all haste.

"Now, how did that fellow escape?" Dusky Dick made inquiry.

"Don't see how et was, cap'n?" one of the guilty guardsmen answered.

"Wasn't he bound?"

"Yes, hand and foot."

"And the doors and windows were secured?"

"Yes, all of them."

"And what were your men doing?"

"Doing our duty, and we didn't hear a single sound in ther cabin at all."

"It's cursed funny. I'll see about it, and if I find you have been asleep, or have been off your posts, I'll have you shot like dogs!"

They hastened away to the cabin where the young woman was held.

A loud rap at the door brought Jezebel out.

"Asleep, were you?" cried Dusky Dick.

"Yes, fer I couldn't keep awake, cap'n," was the reply. "But, I had my head pillow'd on ther prisoner's body, so she couldn't move without wakin' me. She is all right, cap'n, she's all right."

"And so are you, curse you!"

Without any warning whatever, the heartless wretch drove a dagger to the hilt in the old woman's breast, and she fell dead at his feet.

"That is the way I serve sleepers," he cried, fiercely. "You take notice of it, Gideon, and know the responsibility you are assuming when you take this prisoner to your cabin."

Every man of them had stopped short, with momentary horror, at the terrible crime, and Gideon was the first to recover.

"I notice et, cap'n," he said, in even tone. "I begin ter see that you have a good claim on the name ye wear."

"You will find that I have not been called the Dark Dread for nothing, when you come to know me better, old man."

"What do you want here?"

It was the young woman prisoner who demanded.

She had been awakened out of her sleep by the rough voices around her.

The excitement and terror of her position had made it impossible for her to sleep much, but nature had at last claimed its due.

"We want you, my daisy, that's what," Dusky Dick roughly answered.

"No, no; let me remain where I am, I beg of you. Men, if men you *are*, think what you do. Some of you have sisters, it maybe, and you all had mothers—"

"Et needn't do ter larm ther gal needless," spoke old Gideon. "She might go off inter a fit, cap'n, and not come out of et. Tell her what's up. Don't ye think ye had better?"

"That's what T'm going to do, Gideon," the answer.

"Miss, we are not here to take your life, or anything of that kind, but to transfer you to another cabin where you will have more safety. We have found that you are in some danger here."

"Do you tell me the truth?"

"Certainly. Don't you suppose it is to our interest to take care of the prisoners that are going to bring us such rich returns?"

"Yes, yes, I suppose it must be so."

"Of course it's so. Come along with us, now, and we'll put you in the care of two women instead of one."

"I hope they will be more like women than the one who has been my keeper here, sir."

"Never you fear 'bout that 'ar," cried old Gideon. "Ef my wife Elviry and my darter-in-law Sal ain't wimmin', then thar never was any, that's all."

Dusky Dick had now freed the prisoner from the rope that held her bound to the log of the cabin, and she was led out.

At the door was the body of the old hag.

The girl had not awakened till after her death, so did not know of the fate which had overtaken her.

At sight of the old woman lying there, with her life blood staining the sill and the steps, the girl gave vent to a scream and fainted dead away, and had to be carried to her new quarters.

There she was put in the charge of the two women of Gideon's band.

"And you see to et that she don't escape, Elviry," Gideon ordered. "Ef ye do, yer life won't be worth a pinch o' snuff to ye."

"That I swear," declared Dusky Dick.

"And you, too, Sal."

"She sha'n't git away, you bet, dad."

"Here's your fate if she does," and Dusky Dick pointed out to some men who were just carrying the body of Jezebel away for burial.

At that moment a shouting was heard without.

"Something is up," cried Dusky Dick, and with a final word of warning to the new guardians of the woman prisoner, he hastened forth.

Gideon went with him, and it was found that the excited cries came from the direction of the cabin where Deadwood Dick was imprisoned.

"Wehev got him!" one man called out loudly.

"You have got who—what?" demanded Dusky Dick, quickly.

"Why, ther 'scaped prisoner, cap'n! Hyer he is, and he was jest goin' ter try ter do up Deadwood Dick."

"Y-y-y-yes, and I'm ther m-m-m-m-man wh-wh-wh-wh-what k-k-k-k-ketched him, t-t-t-too!" frantically stuttered Stuttering Steve. "I-want—that—hundred—dollars—you-can—bet!" ending by singing to make that part of it thoroughly plain.

#### CHAPTER XI.

##### THE UNSEEN FOE.

DUSKY DICK, Gideon, and the others, all ran in the direction of the scene of excitement.

The guardsmen and the others were in a group behind the cabin in which Deadwood Dick was confined, and in their midst was the other prisoner, whom they were holding securely.

"How did you make your escape?" demanded Dusky Dick.

"Find out," was the surly reply he got.

"That is what I want to do, and it will not be well for the man who is at fault when I do find out, I can tell you."

"None of your cursed crew is to blame."

"What?"

"I said none of your cursed crew is to blame for it."

"How is that?"

"Well, that I prefer not to tell. I had help, and I am likely to have it again if you don't look out."

"Thou fool!"

That voice came out of the open air over their heads, and every man of them looked up, to see—nothing.

"What's the meaning of that, Gideon Grips?" demanded the brigand chief sternly.

"How should I know?" was the demand in retort.

"Isn't that the voice of the guardian angel you claim is following you and your band?"

"Et sounded like et, I admit."

"Then what have *you* to do with it?"

"Nothing."

"Mighty queer."

"The voice was right," spoke up the prisoner. "I was a fool to breathe that I had had help in getting out, for that will balk any further help that I might have received."

"You are right," came the voice from the air again.

"See here, Voice," called out Dusky Dick.

"Well?" in deep tone, further away than before, yet straight in air.

"Who and what are you, and what was your object in aiding this man to get out of my hands?"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Only a mocking laugh came back to him.

"Answer my question!" the brigand chief-tain thundered in anger.

"Well, yes, I will do so, for I will never aid him to escape again; he does not deserve it."

"Tell me, then."

"It was that he might wreak his vengeance upon Deadwood Dick that I freed him from his bonds."

"Ha! then *you* are no friend to Deadwood Dick?"

"Be not surprised if you find him dead on your hands some morning."

The men around looked at one another in amazement undisguised. What could they make of this?

"Who and what are you, I demand?" cried Dusky Dick.

"Ha! ha! ha!"

The mocking laugh, faint and far away, was all that came back to their ears, and all was still.

"This hyer gits me, I'm blamed ef it don't!" cried old Gideon.

"I believe you know something about it," declared Dusky Dick, savagely.

"Me?"

"Yes, you!"

"Wull, pardner, you are away off yer quill, thar."

"Do you mean to tell me that you don't know anything about it? Haven't you said already that this voice is from your guardian angel, as you called it?"

"I take et ter be ther same voice, pardner, but that don't say that I know et any better'n you do. I never *seen* ther voice, that's as true as ther stars shinin' up thar in ther blue."

"What do you *know* about it, though?"

"I know that more than once it has done me a good turn when in danger. But, cap'n, I think we'd better act on a hint we got from et, don't you?"

"And what was that?"

"Why, et threatened Deadwood Dick, ye know, and we don't want ter lose him, not by a big heap. We had better put men inside ther cabin as well as outside, after ther way this other prisoner was got out."

"Ha! you are right! But, say, prisoner, tell us about this escape of yours, now that you have been fool enough to let out so much about it."

"Yes, a fool I was, to ruin my chances of further help from the same direction," the prisoner cursed.

"Well, you have done it, so you may as well tell all about it."

"What will it be worth to you to know?"

"I might make it lighter for you."

"Will you let me go free, if I tell you the little I do know about it?"

"Well, there is no use my telling you a lie out and out, for the game isn't worth it. No, I won't let you go."

"Then there is one other thing I would ask."

"Ask it."

"Will you bring Deadwood Dick out here and let me fight him, man to man?"

"Yes, by Harry, I'll do that."

A great shout of approval went up from the crowd.

"What!" cried Gideon Gripes. "You mean ter ruin ther chances fer that 'ar quarter million?"

"I don't see a big hope of getting it, Gideon, with this unknown enemy in the camp fighting against us. We are likely to have Deadwood Dick dead on our hands, the same as the spirit said."

"Nary a time we won't! Ain't we able ter guard him 'gainst that?"

"We might be, if we knew what the foe is."

"Then make this man tell what he knows, whether he will or not."

"Your word has been passed, captain," reminded the prisoner. "Free me, and then let that man come out here and face me. It shall be his death or mine, and I little care which."

"Et wull be yer own doom," declared Gideon.

"How do you know that, old man?"

"Because, ef all is true that ther captain hyer has told me 'bout this Deadwood Dick, he never misses his man."

"That's why I am willing to see the fun," the brigand chief declared. "You need have little fear for Deadwood Dick, old fellow. Let's bring him out and let them fight it out."

"Captain, hev ye furgot our talk?" Gideon demanded.

"Not at all, old man; there's no danger."

"But, thar's a resk ter be run."

"What's all the trouble out there?" called a voice from the cabin.

It was that of the prisoner within.

"Why, this hyer foe of yours wants ter fight ye, Deadwood," answered the old man. "What do ye say about et?"

"He is no foe of mine," came back the answer. "He mistakes me for another, and there is no reason why I should fight him. I don't want his blood on my hands. Take him and lock him up again."

"Then you won't fight?" asked Dusky Dick.

"Not a fight."

"That settles it, boy. If he won't meet you, then I won't make him do it, for it would only be your death to do so. But, you have not told me about that person, or spirit, or whatever it was, that aided you to escape."

"What's more, I won't, now that you have broken your word with me. And the more fools you, to let that prisoner deceive you as he is doing. I swear to you he is *not* Deadwood Dick, but one Dick VanDeyke. He is closing your eyes beautifully, for some reason."

"That is nonsense, man," disputed Dusky Dick. "Haven't we the confession of his wife in his support? And didn't I see him write a long letter to his manager at Bristol City this afternoon? You talk like a fool."

"And a fool I am—a howling idiot, if this is not Dick VanDeyke."

"Then you refuse to tell what you know about your escape from that cabin in which you were imprisoned?"

"Yes."

"Remember, it is Dusky Dick, the Dark Dread, you are refusing. My dagger is still warm and wet with blood. It may take a drink of yours, if you are not mindful of yourself."

The prisoner was seen to tremble, in spite of himself.

It was enough to chill the blood of any man, these words from so heartless a wretch as Dusky Dick.

That his name had become a terror need not be wondered at; yet these little suggestions we have dropped were as nothing compared to what he really was in character.

"Well, I don't know that it will be of any use for me to keep it back, now," the prisoner yielded.

"I don't see how it can be. Tell me all about it."

"There is little to tell. I suddenly found a man with me in the cabin, and in the dim light I saw that he was masked. He freed my hands and feet, and told me to steal out at the rear door when I heard a whistle without, and go at once and take my revenge upon my foe."

"That all you know?"

"That is all. He went like a shadow, and I don't know where or how he disappeared."

"It is mighty strange, and I'm half inclined to think you lie—"

"No, I speak the truth, I swear it."

"And you followed his advice, and found the way open for you by the rear door, so that you could escape without the knowledge of the guard?"

"Yes, I opened it silently, on hearing the signal, and seeing no one, stepped softly out and went forth at once on my mission of vengeance, thinking that perhaps the way had been opened for me by the same mysterious hand."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WARNING VOICE.

DUSKY DICK turned in a towering rage from the prisoner to the guardsman.

"What!" he thundered. "No man on guard at the rear of that cabin? Who was he, and where was he at that time?"

No one spoke.

"Who was he?" the Dark Dread cried again, fiercely. "Speak his name, some man, and then let him come here and face me. I'll have it known that Dusky Dick is to be feared and obeyed!"

"It was—was Freckles," one man spoke out, weakly.

"Freckles! Then let him come here, or the worse for him. Come, you coward, and show yourself."

One of the brigand chieftain's band came forth, in a slouching manner, a fellow noted for nothing in particular, so far as appearance went, unless for his freckled face.

"Why were you off your post?" the captain demanded.

"I—I—only went around ter git a chaw of terbacky, cap'n," the poor fellow said humbly.

"You wanted something to chew on, did you? Well, chew on *this*, and let it satisfy you for all time! The rest of you take warning by his fate."

With his words he lifted his hand and sent a bullet through the man's heart, dropping him dead in his tracks.

The next moment came the voice from the air again, saying:

"Dusky Dick, terrible thy fate when the blow falls."

"By ther day o' doom!" cried Gideon Gripes, "but that ar' was rough, cap'n, I be hanged ef et wasn't."

"You attend to your own business," cried the reckless murderer, "or the same fate may be yours. I am in no mood to be trifled with, I warn you. Away with that prisoner, before I drop him."

The men hurried the prisoner away, afraid for their lives.

"Wull, I don't want ter cross ye now, cap'n," Gideon said, without any show of fear in his tone, "but I do want ter warn

ye ter pay heed ter that voice, fer I hev never yet knowed et ter tell a lie. You heard what et jest said."

"Yes, I heard; what of it?"

"I take et that et means we had better take ther best kind o' care that no loophole o' danger is left open in this hyer camp."

"We have taken care of that."

"You hev jest fixed out one of yer men fer bein' off his post o' duty, ain't ye?"

"What of it? He deserved it."

"That is one less to back ye, that is all, cap'n. No, that ain't quite all, either."

"What more, then?"

"How do we know what ther other guardsmen ar' doin'?"

"By Harry, that's so!"

"Ye see, cap'n, my neck is in danger hyer as well as *yours*, and these things can't be looked after too keerfully."

"Well, what do you propose?"

"I p'pose that you an' me together takes a walk out ter both posts, and see fer ourselves jest what's goin' on."

"I'll do it!"

"And that will give us a good chance ter talk."

"We'll go. Boys, bury this fellow along with Jezebel, and every one of you take warning by their fate. Come on, Gideon."

"K-K-K-K—"

Stuttering Steve had stepped up to the chief, and hat in hand humbly, began to cackle before him.

"Well, what do you want?" Dusky Dick demanded, breaking in upon him and so saving him the trouble of getting out that word, at least.

"D-d-d-d-don't f-f-f-f-fergit t-t-t-t-to p-p-p-p-pay m-m-m-me th-th-th-th-that hu-hu-hu-hundred d-d-d-d—"

Dusky Dick broke into a laugh, and for the time being his passion was over and men's lives were safe.

"All right, Singer," he said, "I won't forget it, for you did a good piece of work, if what you say is all true. You are quicker with your weapons than with your tongue."

"If I w-w-w-w-wasn't, I re-re-reckon t-t-t-t-t'other fe-fe-fe-feller would a' g-g-g-got ther d-d-d-d—"

"The drop on you?" the chief finished. "Yes; he would have had you dead and buried, Steve."

The others laughed, and Dusky Dick and Gideon set out upon their mission.

"I tell ye, cap'n, ye take a big resk," Gideon remarked.

"Why, how is that, Gideon?" the Dark Dread asked.

"Don't ye see—"

Before the old man could finish what he had started to say there came an interruption.

It was again the voice from the clouds.

"Gideon?" it called.

"Hello, what's up now, I wonder?" Gideon exclaimed, stopping.

Then he responded:

"Wull, old guide, whoever ye ar', what's wanted o' Gideon?"

Then came the rejoinder, in words too plain and too distinct to fail of being understood:

"Gideon, beware; there is treachery in the heart beside thee!"

Quicker than the lightning's flash the old man had whipped out a glittering revolver, and its cold tube was pointed straight at the nose of Dusky Dick.

"Did ye hear that ar'?" the old fellow cried. "Did ye hear what ther voice said ter me? Thar's only *one* heart here besides this old thumper o' mine, and that other is yours."

"You're a fool!" cried Dusky Dick, coolly, though he was slightly pale in spite of his dark visage.

"Mebby I am, pardner," said the old man, grimly, "but I'm not fool enough ter not take a hint when it's dropped by that ar'

onseen voice that has often got me out o' fixes."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

The demand was in as cool a tone as a man could use, and the keen eyes of the brigand chief showed no fear.

"First, pardner, I want ter know what et means."

"It means nothing, Gideon; what do you take me for?"

"I know what ye ar', Dusky Dick."

"What am I, then?"

"Ther blackest-hearted wretch on the face of God's earth this minute."

"Thank you. And what are *you*?"

"Not much behind ye, I reckon, 'cordin' to ther reports ye hev read about me in ther papers from whar I'm known best. Thar's a pair of us."

"Then why do you think I would play you false?"

"Why? Didn't ther voice jest say so?"

"And you believe in that foolishness?"

"You bet I do, pard. When that 'ar voice speaks, then I'm goin' ter take heed ter et. I reckon ye took notice that I wasn't a big heap of while gettin' ther drop on ye."

"You did it pretty soon," I admit."

"And I'm goin' ter keep et thar purty hard, too, you bet. Now, what ar' you goin' ter do about et?"

"What do you think I'll do about it? I can't do anything. You have got me in a fix, just now, and the more fool you. Come, put up your gun, and we'll talk it over like men of sense as we go on."

"That's jest what I claim ter be, Dusky Dick, a man of hoss sense, and ther hardest kind of hoss sense at that, too. Do ye think I'd let you git ther drop on me, now, and let ye do fer me what ye have jest done fer that old woman and that poor devil of a guardsman? Nary."

"Then what *are* you going to do about it?"

"I'm goin' ter keep on top, whar I am now. Up with yer hands, or by ther day o' doom, I'll bore ye!"

They had spoken in low tones, and this command, too, was in an undertone.

"Why, you old fool, you have gone crazy."

The face of the brigand chief was now decidedly ashy, and his voice a little shaky.

"I guess et," the old man declared; "I'm jest crazy enough ter believe that 'ar voice what we both heard, and now I give ye one second ter lift yer paws. I don't mean ter harm ye ef ye do that."

The order was so stern, the tone so grim, that the chief obeyed.

"Thar, now ye hev showed yer hoss sense," Gideon said, in a more friendly tone than before. "I'll jest disarm ye, fer my own safety, while we walk on together, and mebby we kin come ter some sort of understandin' in this hyer matter. I hope we kin."

He took the outlaw chief's weapons from him while he was speaking, thrusting them in the legs of his boots.

"Well, this is the first time I ever got held up in my life," Dusky Dick then said, with a light laugh.

"Et's likewise ther first time ye ever bucked up ergaint old Gideon Grips," was the rejoinder.

"And what have I done to you now, old man?"

"That is what I want ter know, pard. Ther voice said you had treachery in yer heart, and I want ter have et out with ye."

"That voice is a liar."

"Et yester tell me ther truth, Dusky Dick. Et never lied to me before."

"Well, it has done so this time, and I want you to take my word for it. Come, give me back my weapons."

The brigand chief lifted a hand—for he had been allowed to lower his arms—as if

to put it forth in a friendly way, but with the spring of a tiger he hurled himself upon the old man and tried to bear him backward to the ground.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE NEW DEAL.

THEY were some distance away from the center of the camp, and unless one or the other called out, they were not likely to be heard.

As a silent struggle it began, and as such it continued. The first force of the attack carried the old man backward a little, but quickly his strong muscles came into play.

Dusky Dick quickly found that he had found his match.

"Curse you!" he hissed, "I'll grind you to powder!"

"Not ef I kin help et, boy," the invincible Gideon responded.

"I'll have your life!"

"Not ef I know et. You hev bucked up ergaint Gideon Grips from Texas, me son."

The brigand chief exerted his strength to the utmost, but strength was met by strength, and soon his force slackened.

"That ther best ye could do?" inquired Gideon, coolly, holding him with a clutch of steel. "Ef et is, ye ar' not a match fer yer dad yet, not by no means ye ain't."

"Curse you, what are you made of anyhow? There is not a man in my band can stand against me."

"Yes ther is, too, cap'n, and hyer he is—Gideon Grips."

"Well, I give up."

It was a forced surrender, for the chief could do nothing against this man who opposed him.

"Satisfied that ye can't do et, hey?"

"Yes; let up."

"And let you kill me at ther first chance?"

"I won't do it, Gideon. I know your value too well, now."

"And I know your treachery, fer you would 'a' killed me hyer and now, ef ye could."

"I was in a rage."

"No, ye wur cool enough, and ye meant cool murder, too."

"Well, what are you going to do about it? One call from me will bring my men, and a word will send you to your fate."

"You try et on an' see who will die first. You open that trap o' yourn fer a single yaup, and see ef yer candle ain't snuffed fore ye kin say peep."

"What! you mean to kill me?"

"Nary; won't harm one hair of yer head, ef ye will keep yer yaup-trap closed. Ef not—"

"Then what do you mean to do?"

"I mean ter protect my own life, that's what. That's only nat'r'l, ye know. I hev been warned, and Gideon Grips don't need but one warnin' from that source."

"Well, let's go back, and you and your band had better get out so there will be no further trouble between us. You have downed me, and I own it, and as it is the first time I'm willing to take water."

"Et can't be done that way."

"Why?"

"Can't trust ye. I hev seen enough of yer work this night to prove all the bad I've heard of ye, and more, and I know my life won't be safe a minute ef I let up on ye."

"Well, call one or two of my men, then—"

"No use, I reckon I kin take keer of ye without any help, and ef I can't I'll have ter take ther wu'st of et."

With a sudden effort the chief tried to tear himself out of the grasp of his captor.

But, it was the same as before, and he soon had to submit.

Gideon was ready for him, then, and as soon as the strength of the chief was relaxed he exerted his own.

Backward the terrible Dusky Dick was forced, and in a moment he lay on the ground, flat upon his back, with his victorious antagonist astride of him, holding him there.

"I see your game, now," the Dark Dread gasped.

"Et's about time ye had a notion of et, pardner," the easy response.

"You think to put me out of the way, usurp my place, and then handle Deadwood Dick to your own profit."

"You hev hit et, pardner."

As he made that reply to the brigand's guess, he pulled his arms together closely and a pair of handcuffs were clasped upon his wrists.

"Handcuffs!" the man gasped.

"Yes, pard, and ef I can't find ther key when et's wanted, reckon ye will have ter have 'em filed off'n ye. But, ye won't want 'em off right away, fer that won't do."

Having done that, Gideon next gagged the man and tied his feet, and that done, lifted him as though with no effort and bore him away.

Following out upon the trail that led from the camp northward, he proceeded for some distance with his burden, and then he turned from the trail and clambered off among the rocks.

Finally he stopped, laid the helpless man down, and said:

"Thar, cap'n, jest rest easy now till I come baek ergain. I'll be back in less'n a day or two, ef I come at all, and then we'll see what's ter be done wi' ye. Take et easy, and don't git yerself in a fret about yer fix."

With that the old fellow turned and retraced his steps, having deposited his man in such a position between the two rocks that it would be impossible for him to get out and away without help.

When he came out again upon the main trail he did not return to the camp, but went on in the direction of where the guardsmen were stationed.

He could hear them talking, as he drew near, and knew they were awake at any rate.

When he came up he was promptly challenged:

"Who ar' you, thar?"

"Gideon, of Gideon's band."

"What's wanted, old hoss?"

"I hev come out ter see ef everything's all right,"

"Yas, everything's lovely hyer."

"You must keep an eye out fer a s'prise. We ar' afraid Deadwood Dick's men ar' around somewhere, an' they may drop in onto us when we least look fer 'em. Keep wide awake, or ther captain will do fer ye."

"No sleepin' hyer, you bet."

"All right."

The old fellow turned away, but stopped before he had gone a dozen paces.

"Say," he called out, "I think you will be called in early, and ef ye ar', we may have news fer ye when ye come in, so don't delay about gettin' thar."

"What's up?"

"Can't tell ye nothin' now; wait an' see."

He went on, then, and made his way to the outpost in the other branch of the canyon.

There he had about the same talk with the men, and leaving them, returned to the camp, where all was now quiet.

He entered the saloon.

The men there looked up immediately to see who it was, and seeing him alone, they demanded:

"Whar's ther cap'n?"

"I have laid him by on ther shelf fer awhile," was the grim answer.

"What yer mean, old man?"

"Wull, he tried ter do me up, same as he

did ther old woman and that poor feller, and he got ther wu'st of et."

"What!"

"Not dead!"

"Ye ain't killed 'im!"

"Keep yer shirts on, now, boys, keep yer shirts on, and don't git excited about et. He ain't killed, ner even hurt."

"Then where is he?"

"Laid on ther shelf, as I said. Do ye know what he was goin' ter do wi' you lads?"

"No."

"Why, he meant ter give ye ther shake."

"What do ye mean by that 'ar, old man? What was he goin' ter do?"

"Why, he meant ter gobble that quarter million, when et kem hyer, light out, an' then leave you ter stand et."

"Was he goin' ter do that?"

"That's what he was."

"Then whar is he?" demanded one man. "We hev been talkin' over ther way he done et up fer poor Freckles, an' we hev about made up our minds ter take things in our own hands hyer."

"Ye had?"

"Yas, we had."

"Then I'm yer man fer a new deal!"

"What ye mean?"

"I mean that I'm with ye, and we'll go fer that quarter million and make a fair and square divide all around when we git et."

"Hooray! That's what we'll do!"

"Rah fer Gideon! We'll all belong ter Gideon's band!"

"Ha! ha! ha! Yas, that's what's ther matter, fer Gideon is ther best man anyhow."

"You bet he is."

"He'll be honest with ye, anyhow," the old fellow declared, "an' he'll give ye what ye deserve, every time."

"Hooray! We'll all belong ter Gideon's band, an' we'll jest git up an' whoop'er up fer all we're worth, you bet! You ar' ther new captain, old man; you ar' the new captain."

"All right, boys, I'm willin' to take et, but that's one man of ye that has got ter surrender ter me."

"An' who's that one, old man?"

For answer, Gideon whipped out a revolver and pointed it at one of the men, the one who had planned with Dusky Dick to play him false.

"*Thar* he is," he cried. "He plotted wi' Dusky Dick ter hand me and my family over to ther law and git ther reward that's on our heads, and I ruther reckon we'll be doin' ther right thing ter take keer he don't do et. Hey, boys?"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### SPEADING THE NET.

"WHAT'S ther matter?" the prisoner demanded, pale as death.

"You know well enough what's ther matter," Gideon declared. "You know what you and Dusky Dick had in mind ter do."

"No, I don't, nuther; you ar' away off."

"Well, mebby I am, but you ar' my prisoner all ther same. Keep them 'ar hands right up, now, while I talk a minute. This galoot, pard, is a traitor to us all, ther same as Dusky Dick himself."

"Hang him!" was shouted.

"No, we won't do that," said Gideon, "but we'll take care of him so's he can't do any harm. He was goin' ter help Dusky Dick sell me out to ther Texas officers and git ther reward, and then they was goin' ter skip out with all ther boodle and leave ye in ther lurch."

"Hang him! Hang him!"

"We'll hang him an' Dusky Dick together!"

"No, nothin' of ther kind, but we'll take keer of 'em that they don't git out of our

hands ter do us hurt, and we'll see to gettin' that quarter million out o' Deadwood Dick; and, when we hev divided thall all around, share an' share alike, we'll scatter and git out, fer et's goin' ter be too hot hyer ther first we know."

"That's so."

"Yas, that's what we'll do."

"Well, boys, hev ye got anything ter drink in this hyer camp? I haven't seen a drop sense I have been hyer."

"No, thar ain't a drop in ther Garden, cap'n."

"We hev made hogs of ourselves, and now we're in a famine on 'count o' that."

"Jest what I thort meself. Wull, I want ye to drink to my good health, seein' that ye hev made me yer cap'n."

"Reckon we'll have ter drink water, then."

"Nary. That won't do. I hev got somethin' along wi' me, in some of my traps in ther cabin, and I'll fetch it out. Thar ain't much, but as I don't drink meself et will go around, I guess."

"You don't drink?"

"No, fer ther reason that I'm 'flicted wi' a sort o' dainty stummick and can't stand et. But, that don't need ter interfere wi' you, so I'll send and git ther nectar and let ye have a taste. Et won't go fur, so ye must be content wi' a small dose. Hyer, Jim Gipes, go to ther cabin an' git that jimmy-john."

One of the old man's sons set forth at once upon the errand.

They talked on until his return, and the old fellow rose in favor among the men every minute.

When Jim came back he had the demijohn in hand.

A cheer greeted him, and the gang of ruffians quickly ranged themselves at the bar.

Gideon's sons were among the others, and Gideon himself took the demijohn and stepped behind the bar to deal out the "dew of hell" to them.

"This hyer jimmy-john ain't full," he cried, as he shook it. "I thort it was full, to ther top. I'll bet ther old woman has been at et, and ef I find she has I'll give her perticklar fits, you bet."

Only one glass could be found, the others having been disposed of as targets for pistol practice when the bar went dry.

"See hyer, you boys," Gideon said to his sons, "you jest drop out of this hyer till we see ef that's enough ter go around. Ef that is, then you will come in fer a drop, and ef that ain't ye won't."

His "boys" drew back from the bar in obedience, and the stuff was poured.

From man to man Gideon passed along, giving each one about an equal quantity, and at the last man the supply gave out.

At that Gideon's sons began to complain.

"Ye didn't do that fair, dad," said one.

"What's ther reason I didn't, I want ter know?" was demanded.

"Ye gev 'em too much all around."

"Never you mind me lads. These hyer fellers has been wi'out fer a long time an' they had ter have whether you got a drop or not. And that's more of 'em out on guard that's got ter have a dose, too."

Said one man:

"Et looks like a dry chance fer 'em, now, cap'n."

"No, I've got a little more of ther stuff at ther cabin, ef that old woman ain't drunk et all up, an' ef she has—"

At that moment the better half bounded into the place with a whoop.

"See hyer, you Gid Gipes!" she cried. "What d'y'e mean by sendin' and takin' that 'ar likker out of ther cabin, when—"

"Look hyer, now, old woman," Gideon interrupted, "you shut your head and git right back whar ye kem from. Ef ye don't,

I'll larn ye a lesson ye won't forget in a hurry."

"Gid Gipes, do ye know who you ar' talkin' to?"

"Yas, I reckon I do, old woman; I'm talkin' at *you*, straight. What have you been doin' pokin' your nose inter this jimmy-john—"

"I won't stand that 'ar from you! I want you ter know that you and me's one, and what's yours is mine; and by ther great old—"

"Get out!" yelled Gideon, and lifting the empty demi-john he threw it at her with force, barely missing her head, and she turned and ran.

"I'll larn her what she'll stand!" Gideon cried. "I don't let no woman talk back to me in that fashion, you bet. And you, Jim, you run and git that jimmy-john before she downs ther hull thing fer spite."

The son obeyed promptly.

"Now, boys," the new captain said further, "I want ye to go out and take yer places on guard, and let t'other fellers come in and git a taste. You kin tell 'em what's happened, and tell 'em we have made a new deal and ar' goin' ter have honest government hyer or none."

"All right, cap'n, what you say is law. And you bet they'll be hyer on a tall run, when we tell 'em thar's somethin' ter tickle their throats with."

So, the men divided themselves in two companies and went out to take their places on guard.

Gideon had cautioned them, too, to be extra vigilant, declaring his belief that Deadwood Dick had help near at hand, and that unless every precaution was taken a surprise might be sprung upon the camp.

It was not a great while before the relieved guardsmen came running in, all out of breath.

"Whar is et?" they panted.

"Right hyer, boys, right hyer," answered Gideon. "Come up and take et, fer et's like salvation—free ter all."

The men took their portions of the yile-stuff eagerly, and when all had drank, then Gideon told them of the change that had been made, and the reasons for it.

They all greeted their new leader with a hearty cheer.

As by that time it was getting late, Gideon proposed that they should seek their bunks, and in a little while the whole camp was asleep.

The guardsmen who were watching over Deadwood Dick and the other prisoner had not been forgotten, by the way, but some of the liquor had been sent out to them while the outside guardsmen were waited for.

Next morning the sun was high before the camp began to stir.

Gideon and his band—his family—had been up for some time, however, and had done some important work.

The old man and two of his sons had gone out and brought in the prisoner—the brigand chief.

He had been placed in a cabin by himself.

The men were a sleepy-looking lot, when they came forth, and they looked at one another in an almost foolish manner.

"What in ther doose has struck us?" questioned Injun Jack. "I never slept as late as this in my life afore, and I feel now as if I hadn't had half enough."

"Th-th th-that is j-j-j-j-jest wh-wh-what's ther m-m-m-mat-matter wi' m-m-m-m-me," stammered Stuttering Steve. "I f-f-f-feel li-li like a f-f-f-f—"

"Yes, and ye look like a fool, too," interrupted Rooster Rube.

"D d-d-d-dang et! I wasn't g-g-g-g-goin' ter s-s-s-say f-f-f-f—"

"Ye had better wait till ye git over intertinity, 'fore ye try ter git that word clear out, Singer," suggested Red Mike.

And at that there was a laugh.

Gideon Gipes came out from his cabin, stretching himself, and called out:

"Guess we hev tried ter make a hull night o' et, boys. Thought we had begun our everlastin'-er that's what I would a thought ef I had thought a tall. When I woked up I thort ther camp was dead. Wonder how ther guard stood et?"

"Et wasn't no guard at all, ef et slept like I did," said one.

"Wull, go out and bring 'em all in," ordered Gideon, "and we'll try Dusky Dick and see what's ter be done wi' him."

Messengers set off, and while they were gone the other prisoners were brought out, the old man, Gideon, saying he would make one job of the whole business.

Deadwood Dick and the other men were brought forth bound, but the woman prisoner was allowed to come forth free.

She had been permitted to make her toilet, too, and was altogether a different person in appearance.

Young and fine-looking, she had the air of a lady born, and a face of intelligence.

At sight of her the prisoner—Brandson—cried out:

"Kate!—Kate Rossetyr! How can you longer deny your identity? I would know you among a thousand!"

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### MAKING THE HAUL.

THE young woman looked at him when he spoke, but gave him no other sign of recognition or attention.

He addressed her again, with more strength of language, but was not noticed even then, and in a rage he turned upon Deadwood Dick.

"And you!" he cried. "You lie when you say you are other than Dick VanDeyke. I know you, and you cannot deceive me. Were I free, I would have your life!"

"You will not be free in a hurry, though, Raybold Brandson," was the answer. "You are in the hands of persons who will take care of you for that little job of forgery."

The man paled.

"How knew you of anything of that, Deadwood Dick?" he demanded.

"Ha! you admit that I am Deadwood Dick, then?"

"You must be, to know that."

"Well, you are not far from the truth."

Just then a cheer was heard.

Gideon and his son Peter were coming from one of the cabins with Dusky Dick a prisoner.

There was a shout sor his hanging without trial, and a rush was made, but Gideon waved them back with a revolver, shouting:

"No, not yet, boys; wait till I have somethin' ter say 'bout et."

Gideon and his son led the prisoner forward to the stoop of the saloon, which raised them a little above the others around, so that all could see as well as hear; and turning to his band, said:

"Now, before we attend ter this galoot, let's see about t'other prisoners and see jest what's what. Deadwood Dick, you first. Is that your name or is it not? We want straight facts, and we're goin' ter have 'em."

"Well, then, it is not my name."

"Who, then, ar' ye?"

"I am Richard Van Deyke."

"What, then, was your object in tellin' that ye wur Deadwood Dick? That's what I want ter know."

"I did it to save my life."

"And how was that goin' ter save ye?"

"Why, if Deadwood Dick is rich as you say, I thought to pass for him."

"Wull, that's a purty weak story, I take et. If ye got found out at et, do ye think that would save yer life?"

"Hardly."

"And do ye think we'll spare et now?"

"You might as well. You can't gain any-

thing by holding me, and you can't gain anything by killing me."

"Let us both go free," cried Brandson, "and only one will leave this place alive!"

"No, your goose is cooked," Gideon declared. "We'll see what Dusky Dick has ter say fer himself before goin' further. Pete, jest give him ther use of his jaw."

The gag was removed.

"A thousand curses on you!" the brigand chief roared. "Men, I call on you to shoot him down like a dog, and then free me!"

"That little jig is up," said Gideon, calmly. "We have had a new deal hyer. I am now captain, and all these men ar' Gideon's band. Ye see, that don't work fer a cent."

"What! You are false to me?" the chief cried.

"Yas they ar'," Gideon answered for them. "I hev told them how ye meant ter play 'em, and they ar' onto ye."

"Men, it's a lie!" the frantic prisoner cried. "He is the one who will play you false! Release me, and we'll hang the lot of them, and then for that quarter million."

Hands fell upon weapons.

"That quarter-million will be all right," declared Gideon, "and when et comes hyer every man will get a share in et. But, ye see, now, this prisoner denies that he is Deadwood Dick, and ef that's ther case ther money is gone ter smoke."

"He lies!"

"No, I do not lie, for I am not Deadwood Dick."

"Hearken, ye!"

The voice came from the air over their heads, and all looked up.

"Ther voice again," cried Gideon. "Wull, what is et?"

"The time is now ripe. The net has been spread: now make the haul."

The men looked at one another in wonderment.

"That's what's ther matter!" a high-keyed voice shouted. "Great old hambone of devastatin' days o' chronic demolishun! I kin stand this hyer rig no longer, an' hyer et goes!"

The personage was "Mrs. Gipes," and as she shouted she came running to the front, tearing off her clothes as she came, and as she ended she stood forth a homely, wrinkled old man—a man without any ears, a defect which the wig of woman's hair had kept from notice before.

There was no mistaking him, it was Old Avalanche, the one-time "Great Injun Annihilator."

"No more blasted woman's toggery for me!" he cried, prancing around. "Great hambone of ther dusty days o' prehistoric revolutionary floods an' famines, no! I hev a plenty, thank ye. And fer you, Dicky, boy, yer ears shall be punished fer many a day ter come, for ther forced silence ye hev made me observe!"

He shook his head at Gideon.

No one seemed able to take in the situation yet.

What meant it?"

"Yes, the time is ripe," Gideon spoke, in a changed voice, a clear, stern, ringing tone.

With a few quick movements he cast off his false hair and beard, and threw from him the over garments he had been wearing, and there stood forth—Deadwood Dick, Junior, the redoubtable Richard himself!

The men paled, fell back before him, and every hand drew a weapon.

"Who ar' you?" demanded Rooster Rube, in a husky voice.

"I am Deadwood Dick," was the cool response.

"Kill him!" thundered Dusky Dick.

A score of weapons clicked, but no report came forth.

And then came the order from every side for the band of villains to raise their hands.

They looked, they paled, and dismay fell upon them. Ten men, besides Deadwood

Dick himself, held them covered with glittering revolvers!

Deadwood Dick laughed at them.

"You see you have fallen into a trap," he said. "Dusky Dick, I was sent here by the Government for the purpose of capturing you and your band, and I have done it. I have only these ten with me, my Decade, I call them."

"Oh, that I might be free, with a weapon in hand!" the brigand chief cried, and he tugged at his bonds to get free.

"You are helpless," said Dick. "It is all up with you. I had my plans well laid, and though I had to change them greatly to accommodate circumstances as I found them here, I have been successful. This lady, sir, is my wife and able partner in my work, Kodak Kate. You can now see that she and this other lady look very much alike, and that I and Mr. VanDeyke resemble each other."

Yes, Kodak Kate was there, having passed as "Sally Gipes," wife of "Peter," and mother of the three youths. These were, respectively, Dolan Hardy, Billy Bucket, and Johnny Smile.

The other six were well-known detectives on Deadwood Dick's staff—for Dick, now, was at the head of a strong agency in the West-land.

"It was a clever trick, I am willing to claim," Dick said further. "These papers we showed you were printed in full at Bristol City for the one purpose of deceiving you, and it worked well. And, had anything miscarried, we had enough dynamite bombs at hand to blow you all out of this gulch in one minute. And now, since you know me for what I am, it is needless for me to go over my work in detail."

"Can I buy my freedom?" asked Dusky Dick, coolly.

"No, you can not, sir. You are my prisoner, and I will hand you over to the authorities."

"Men, at them!" the brigand chief then shouted. "You are five to one, and you can down them if you will! At them, no matter if you are unarmed!"

The rush was made, and it would have succeeded, but weapons spoke sharply and half a dozen of the rascals went down; and seeing that only death awaited them, the others threw up their hands.

"Hold on!" cried out Stuttering Steve. "I sur-sur—"

"Yes, the only thing you can do, if you value your life," Deadwood Dick declared, grimly. "Bind them, men, every one."

That was done.

Then Richard VanDeyke was released, and he and Kate Rossetyr clasped each other in arms.

Their story was simple. Kate was the only child of a rich American residing in Mexico, and her father had desired her to marry Brandson. She had refused, and in order to wed VanDeyke, whom she loved, had eloped with him. They had fallen in the way of Dusky Dick, who captured the young woman and held her for ransom. The men, searching for her—and Brandson for VanDeyke, likewise fell into the hands of the outlaw band.

And so ends our story. Deadwood Dick and his ten took their prisoners safely to the authorities; where they delivered them up, and each one of them met the fate he justly deserved. Dick received great praise for the difficult task he had so skillfully accomplished, as well as the reward that had been offered, and the latter he divided equally among his men. VanDeyke and his promised bride went with them to Bristol City where they were married, and where they settled down—for a time at any rate, having become fast friends with Deadwood Dick and Kodak Kate, whose parts they had been forced to play.

THE END.

# TWO REMARKABLE HEROES.

## The Deadwood Dicks, Senior and Junior, are the Gentlemen.

There Have Already Been Ninety Volumes Published Relating to Their Astounding Courage, Coolness and Skill.

In only one sense of the word can it be regarded as a novel statement when the fact is here recorded that literature has given many heroes to the world, and perhaps more than one reader will have to think a moment over this remark before the subtle delicacy of its genial wit strikes home.

But it is most essentially a half dime novel statement that will be news to many when it is added that literature, if traced from the dimly distant days when Adam was a mere child down to the present day, would show but few heroes that in the eyes of boyhood would be even judged worthy of comparison with the two greatest heroes known to American literature, or, to promptly reveal them, Deadwood Dick and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

Perhaps if everything were known of his career in bookland, Robinson Crusoe would rank above any hero ever offered to the boys of the world, for Robinson made his appearance a long time ago and his adventures have been translated into pretty nearly all the languages that are printable; but while Robinson is and ever will be a worthy personage, he is, it is to be feared, most decidedly a back number in the eyes of several millions of the boys and young men of to-day.

And then, too, Robinson's reputation was made and safely anchored to leeward at a time when competition in the manufacture of heroes of juvenile literature was so slack that it is scarcely worth mentioning. Had he postponed his debut until to-day, Robinson would have had to hire a press agent, of the very objectionable type known as a hustler, and even with that assistance the odds are that he would have experienced a severe frost.

Robinson, like many other bygone characters calculated to thrill the juvenile mind, labored under the disadvantage of having only a comparatively few adventures, and he was further very heavily handicapped by having to confine his adventures within the narrow circles of probability and common sense. The modern heroes of fiction for young America, who are now as countless as the sands of the sea, and of whom the Deadwood Dicks are much the most important, are not troubled by any such confined conditions, and with the bars let down admitting them to the boundless expanse of the utterly impossible, it is but natural that their unnaturalness should bear away the palm of popularity, and such as Robinson be left far behind in the race.

Therefore the statement of the surpassing prominence of the two Deadwood Dicks having been so emphatically made, it will be as well to justify the emphasis with some facts about their history from a bookseller's point of view, before plunging into the seething vortex of their recorded lives.

Deadwood Dick made his first appearance before the public in 1877, under the auspices of Beadle & Adams, the William street publishers of popular literature for the masses, and for fourteen years he or his son has been reappearing at intervals, which were at first irregular, but they have now settled down to a basis of once in six weeks.

It was in 1885 that Deadwood Dick the elder made his final appearance after thirty-three volumes of adventure, and his son, Deadwood Dick, Jr., who had been growing up in them for many years, took up the running, and has kept it up to the tune of very nearly fifty volumes more in the six years that have passed since his remarkable father was buried.

During the fourteen years they have been on the market these stories have been sold at five cents a volume, and the circulation they have attained throughout the length and breadth of the land, has been in the aggregate something truly vast, for the entire series is kept constantly in print, and many of the early issues are now enjoying a sale of their twenty-seventh or thirtieth edition.

It can be easily believed, therefore, that the two Dicks are so firmly engrafted on the tree of popular literature for boys and young men, that their position is assured so long as their author can keep it up, and that they stand to-day head and shoulders above all rivals in the eyes of the public for which they have lived, and for which one of them has died.

American boyhood, and that is a tremendous factor in the land, now knows Deadwood Dick, Jr., a good deal better than it knows its catechism, and millions of young minds absorb the thrilling incidents of his career in his everlasting warfare against crime and his never-ending solving of impenetrable mysteries.

Millions of boys follow his stealthy footsteps as he tracks his vicious victims to their undoing, and then, when the victims are thoroughly undone, the millions wait hungrily for the next volume, which on every sixth Tuesday appears with the certainty of the Tuesday itself, and a new set of delightful thrills go thrilling away from Maine to California.

Mr. Victor, the courteous editor for Beadle and Adams, who told *The Evening Sun* what it wished to know about the history of the two Dicks, said that he had often had his attention called to what

are known as Deadwood Dick clubs, which are organizations consisting of from three to a dozen boys, who take turns in buying the Deadwood Dick novels as they appear, and reading them in rotation, so that in the case, for instance, of a club of six members, each member would be kept thoroughly informed of his pet hero's latest doings, at a cost of only five cents once in thirty-six weeks, while when nine of these economical young enthusiasts pool their issues in the same direction a nickel will serve the purpose for a whole year.

Mr. Victor, in his curious and interesting task of editing this phase of the literature of the day for one of the most extensive publishing houses in the business, has weighed the question carefully, and finds that a volume once in six weeks is just about the amount of Deadwood Dick, Jr., that his countless admirers can comfortably absorb and digest.

In England, too, this extraordinary series of eighty volumes telling of the doings of father and son has been republished for years, to the infinite delight of the boys and youths of Great Britain and the solid satisfaction of the London publishers that had the pleasure of thus getting square with America on the piracy question.

"When I received the first Deadwood Dick story," said Mr. Victor, "I was struck with the freshness of the author's style, and after toning it down a little sent it to the printers. The story made a hit and I accepted another and another until we found that the character was becoming unusually popular among our patrons."

"I kept urging the author to make the stories less terrifically forcible in the language of his rougher characters, and gradually the sulphurous nature of their dialogues became moderate enough to need but little editing, and at the same time the torrents of liquor that flowed like rivers through his earlier manuscripts, dwindled to rivulets under the influence of my appeals for less rum."

"The author urged the absolute truth of both the language and the amount of whisky-drinking that he attributed to his characters, but I begged in the interests of morality that the flow of both one and the other be curbed, and of course the stories were none the worse for his doing so."

"Deadwood Dick, himself, was also gradually reformed and changed from the outlawed terror of the law-abiding to the deadly foe of the law breakers, and when once that transformation was achieved his subsequent course in the path of virtue was an assured success.

"True, the path was a somewhat rocky, bloody and dangerous one; but no one who follows him along its various ups and downs can doubt its virtue, and from that virtue he never deviated."

The full and official list of the titles of this remarkable series would fill at least a column of *The Evening Sun*. It contains some real gems in the way of names calculated to attract the youth in search of a thrill. For instance there is Deadwood Dick's Device; or, The Sign of the Double Cross. A Wild, Strange Tale of the Leadville Mines—of Men of Steel—of Toughs and Tigers—of Road-agents, Regulators, Avengers, Adventurers, and of the Thrilling Life in the New Eldorado.

Can any one deny the comprehensiveness of that or his probable power of seducing nickels from the pockets of novel-reading boys? Then there are a number of delightfully alliterative titles, such as Deadwood Dick's Defiance, or, the Double Daggers, and Deadwood Dick's Double, or, the Ghost of Gorgon's Gulch. Peculiarly fetching, too, in their forceful effect on the small boy's pocket money must be Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whoop Up; Deadwood Dick's Dead Deal; or, Captain Crackshot, the Girl Brigand; Deadwood Dick's Death Trail; Deadwood Dick's Death Plant, and Deadwood Dick's Diamonds. In the selection of localities for his adventures Deadwood Dick, Jr., shows far more desire for variety than the old man ever did, for he has volumes that relate his remarkable doings in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, Rochester, Buffalo, San Francisco, Denver, Galveston, Leadville, and even at Coney Island. The titles of the younger hero's volumes show that he met with and got the better of swindlers, bunco men, counterfeitors, bank robbers, horse thieves, smugglers, pirates, stage robbers, and, indeed, pretty nearly every sort of criminal known to the police, while his father confined himself almost exclusively to rooting out the Western type of bad man. Progress has, therefore, a worthy representative in Deadwood Dick the younger.

It is surely not necessary to add that in the moderate compass of a newspaper article, only the merest shadow of justice can be done to the careers of any heroes that have had such an extraordinary collection of stories as that written about them. If a month or so were given to a careful reader for the task, he might, with the assistance of a double-entry bookkeeper, tabulate the number of blood-curdling episodes that occur in the eighty volumes together

with the exact number of persons who are shot, stabbed, hanged and removed in sundry less conventional borderland ways, such as being tossed into quicksands, burned in the tops of forest giants, fed to bears or made to try and walk on tight ropes across bottomless chasms.

The final summary would be something appalling in its gory magnitude, and would form a record of slaughter that would shame the battle of Gettysburg, but it might prove a source of entertainment to some idle person of a sanguinary turn of mind, and so the idea is suggested here.

The variety of duels in these stories is another source of wonder to the reader, and it must be acknowledged that Mr. Wheeler has as prolific an imagination as it is possible to conceive. Every volume of the series fairly bristles with episodes of a nature that makes those related in the more ordinary 10-cent or 5-cent stories seem as mild as hotel milk, and hotel milk has been pronounced by scientists to be the mildest object in nature.

In coming face to face with the notes of a variety of episodes and adventures in the books which the writer made as he hurriedly went through the eighty volumes, and which he hoped to utilize in this article, an overpowering sense of having buckled up against the impossible rears its dread front and mocks the man who dared to face the task of doing justice to the subject.

Once or twice a flowing beaker of mævie or nerve food, has been tossed off, and with grim determination the struggle made to sift the material on hand and condense it into something like a reasonable shape.

With a heartfelt sigh the colossal task has, however, been reluctantly abandoned. There are the eighty volumes each so crowded with thrills and heart-tugs that it were madness to hope to do justice to them collectively and rank injustice to discriminate between them. The three larger pictures illustrating this article have been selected at random from eighty just as interesting, and the smaller ones are por rafts of Deadwood Dick, his wife, Calamity Jane, and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

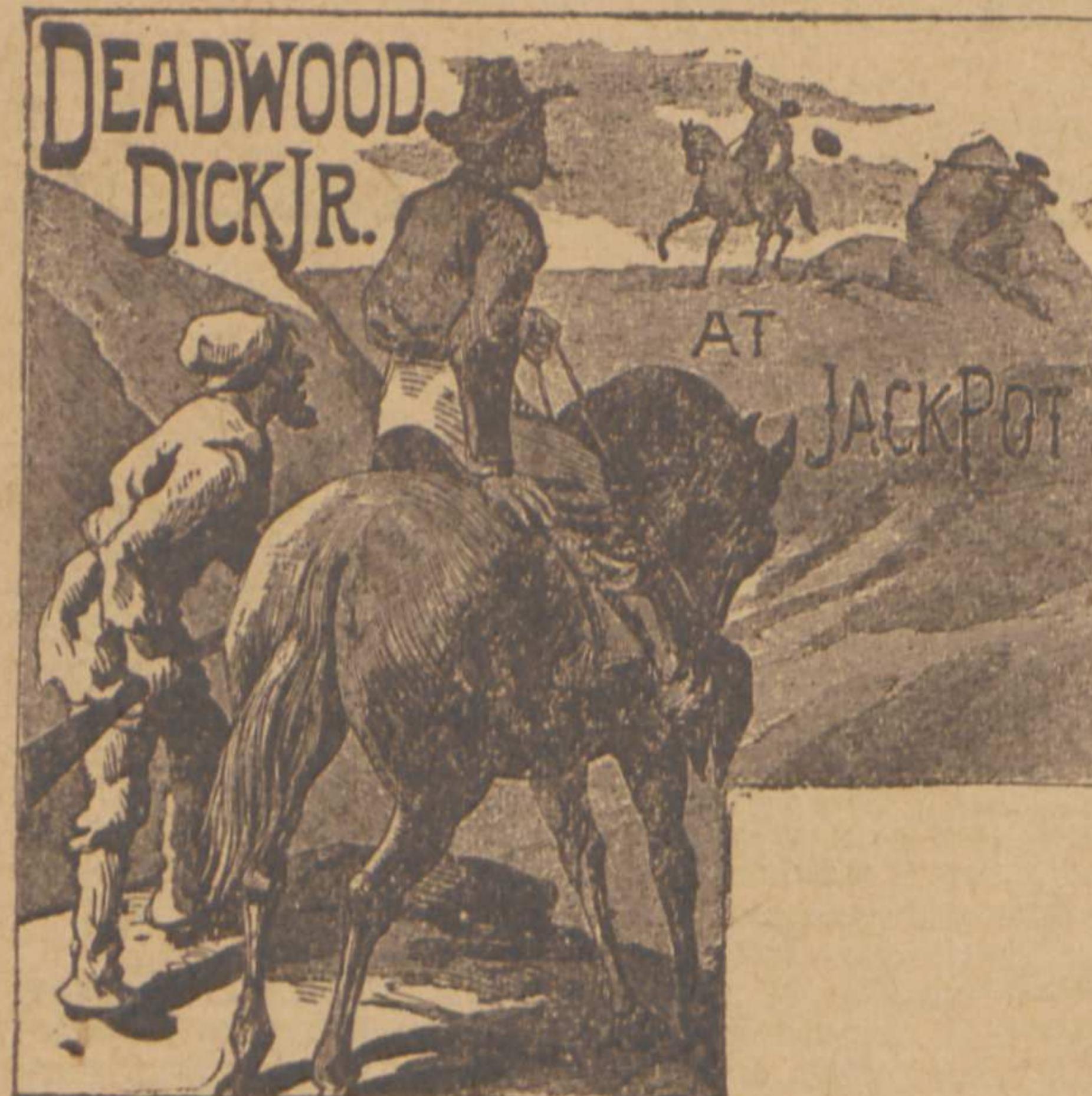
To abandon the idea of giving a few extracts from their lives causes infinite pain, but if once a start were made in that direction, it would be cruel to *The Evening Sun's* readers to stop, and it is therefore better not to relate one single adventure. Suffice it to say that the stories are clean and well written, and until the glut of gore and supernatural courage and success of the heroes becomes indigestible to the ordinary mind, there is much amusement to be found in adventures of the Deadwood Dicks.

The small boy and his larger brother have minds attuned by nature to absorb the music of the constant flow of villains' blood and the never-ceasing cracking of rifles and revolvers that keep the silence in a perpetual state of unrest throughout the Deadwood Dick series, but it is not so with a more mature mind, and unless you are a small boy or a youth prone to admire the terrifically heroic in literature, you are advised not to purchase the entire eighty volumes, but to try a sample here and there from the list. If you are a small boy, or the other fellow you doubtless know more about it than the writer, and so don't want any advice on the subject.

As a parting tribute to Mr. Wheeler, the owner of the brain that has evolved and continues to evolve the most popular boys' stories of the day, it is but fair to add, and an interesting fact as well, that he has also found time to dash off some novels about Cloven Hoof, the Buffalo Demon; Bob Woolf, the Girl Dead-Shot; Death-Face, Detective; Old Avalanche; Wild Edna, the Girl Brigand; Jim Bludsoe, Jr., the Boy Phoenix; Buckhorn Bill; Gold Rifle, the Sharpshooter; Rosebud Rob; Nugget Ned; Idyl, the Girl Miner; Photograph Phil; Canada Chet; Watch-Eye; Jack Hoyle, the Young Speculator; Gilt-Edged Dick, the Sport Detective; Cinnamon Chip, the Girl Sport; Bonanza Bill; Boss Bob, the King of Bootblacks; Solid Sam, the Boy Railroad Agent; Captain Ferret, the New York Detective; New York Nell, the Boy-Girl Detective; Nobby Nick of Nevada; Wild Frank, the Buckskin Bravo; Fritz, the Bound Boy Detective; Snoczer, the Boy Sharp; Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornado; Cyclone Kit, the Young Gladiator; Sierra Sam, the Frontier Ferret; Jumbo Joe, the Boy Patrol; Denver Doll, the Detective Queen; Turk, the Boy Ferret; A No. 1, the Dashing Tell-taker; Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; Kelly, Hickey & Co., the Detectives of Philadelphia; Little Quick Shot; Kangaroo Kit, the Mysterious Miner; Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood; First-class Fred; Yreka Jim, the Gold Gatherer; Nabob Ned; Cool Kit, the King of Kids; Bicycle Ben; Wrinkles, the Night Watch Detective; High Hat Harry, the Baseball Detective; Sam Slabsides, the Beggar Boy Detective; Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives; and Santa Fe Sal, the Slasher.

He may therefore be pronounced the Storyteller from Storytellerville, and the Deadwood Dick stories will be his towering monument.

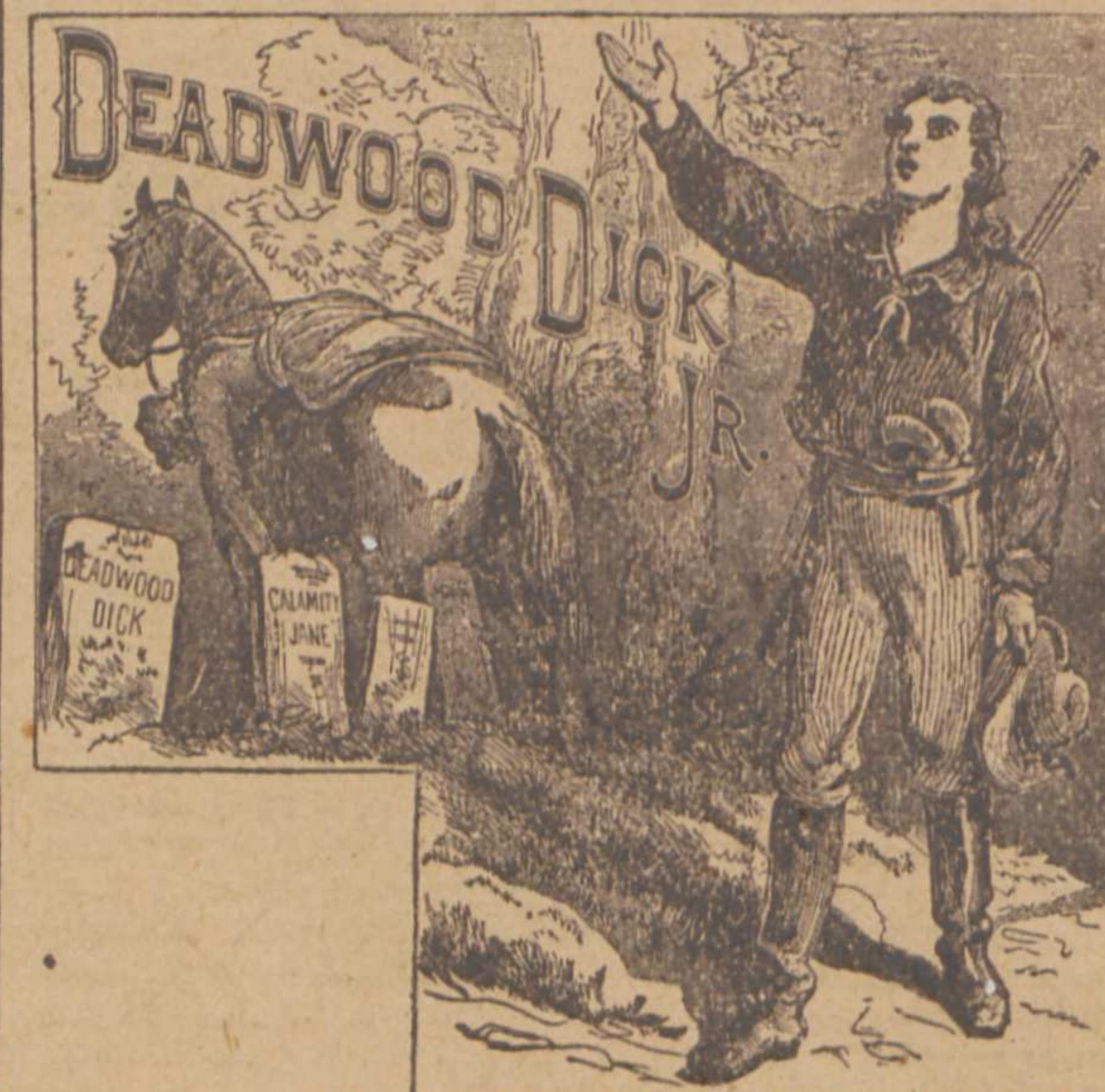
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 221 Deadwood Dick's Death Plant; or, Sugar-Coated Sam.  
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 648 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Chase across the Continent; or, A Race for a Ruthless Rogue.  
 654 Deadwood Dick, Jr., Among the Smugglers.  
 660 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Insurance Case.  
 666 Deadwood Dick, Jr., Back in the Mines.



- 672 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Durango; or, "Gathered In."  
 678 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Discovery.  
 684 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dazzle; or, The Nemesis of Nutmeg Bonanza.  
 690 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dollars; or, The Hummingbird of Honeysuckle.  
 695 Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Danger Divide; or, Developing the Dead Secret.  
 700 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Drop; or, The Sojourn at Satan's Spring.  
 704 Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Jack-pot; or, Making Crooked Things Straight.  
 710 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in San Francisco; or, Kodak Kate, the Snap-Shot.  
 716 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Still Hunt; or, The Second Round in San Francisco.  
 722 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dominoes; or, The Rival Camps of the Northern Border.  
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